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April

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- Trams, Australia January 2000. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer starts with the superb Loftus Tram museum in Sydney then Melbourne, University terminus, Nth. Richmond, Kew and Glenferrie Road.
- Trams/Light Rail, Australia 1999/2000. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer visiting Whiteman Park tram line, Perth, the remote 1 mile Pier Tramway at Carnarvon WA, new light rail line in Sydney plus monorail, finishes with Melbourne trams.
- British Connection, various countries. Buses. All new material buses with British connection featuring Hong Kong 12/97, Yangob 1/98, Malta 2/98, Calcutta 12/98 and finally Sydney 1/00. Lasts 60 minutes. All film by Dave Spencer.
- Sydney, Australia January 2000. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer starts with suburban private operators at Hurstville then rail replacement services with variety of operators and Sydney Bus outside Sydney Town Hall.
- Australia, Buses December 1999-January 2000. December 1999, Perth WA with new DAB operated free CAT services, bus museum at Whiteman Park, Sydney with huge Tempe bus museum and Sydney buses in service. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer.
- Trucks, Australia January 2000. Filmed mainly in Melbourne, Nth. American and European trucks bumper to tail in the rush hour, plus road trains in Western Australia at Port Hedland. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer.
- Nottinghamshire, UK Buses. Deregulation to Millennium. Video coverage of developments in the county concentrating on Nottingham, Mansfield with material from PMP collection and extra material covering the 80s.
- Derbyshire, UK Buses. Deregulation to Millennium. Video coverage of developments in the county concentrating on Derby and Chesterfield. Drawn from PMP collection with additional archive video footage in the 80s.
- Hants/Wilts, UK Buses. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer visiting Portsmouth February 1999, Winchester April 1999, Salisbury November 1999 and Basingstoke December 1999, plus 1987 cine from Southampton by George Roberts.
- British Rail, UK Heavy Rail. 60 minutes of good quality amateur cine film by George Roberts taken 1970s/80s, featuring mainly London and Home Counties. Includes 3rd rail and overhead electrics plus Diesels, DMU, Delics etc.
- Potteries, UK Buses, November 1999. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer with fleet numbers announced to aid with vehicle identification. Mainly around Hanley bus station, town centre and Stoke upon Trent.
- West Midlands, UK Buses 1997-99. We start with bright sun on Dudley bus station in November 1997, then forward in time to West Bromwich and Walsall in November 1999. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer. Fleet numbers announced.
- Birmingham, UK Buses November 1999. 60 minutes, filmed by Dave Spencer, with fleet numbers announced. A variety of central locations with low floor deckers and articulated buses in some rather dark autumnal weather.

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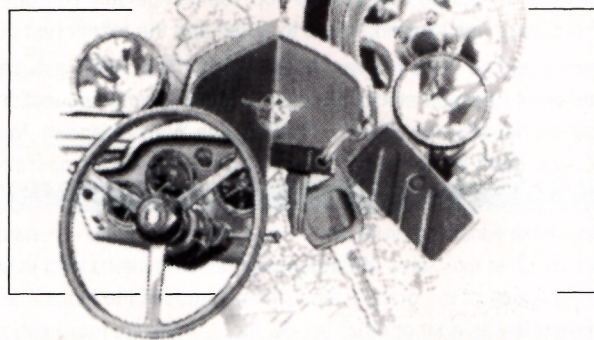
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Modern

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January-March 2000

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April 2000

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COULD DOT.COM FEVER HELP THE BUS?

Those of you with shares in the quoted big five bus groups, or who derive vicarious pleasure from seeing how others' investments have fared, will have noticed how rapidly these businesses' share values have fallen in recent months. Not so long ago, *The Sunday Times's* listing of the Top 200 UK companies contained Stagecoach, National Express, FirstGroup and Arriva — with Stagecoach the first to be admitted to the FTSE100 listing of the Top 100 companies. By early March, Stagecoach was well out of that club, languishing around 150th place, FirstGroup has hovered close to 200th and the others had plunged into the netherworld beyond such financial stardom.

This may seem no more relevant to the real world of running buses than worrying about which rock group is in the Top 10, but the poor performance of transport stocks in recent months seems unquestionably to have been one of the deciding factors — perhaps even *the* factor — in Metroline's decision to sell out to DelGro (see 'News' page 6). Metroline may not have been the largest group, but it's the largest UK operator so far to sell out to a foreign buyer and it would be naïve to assume it will be the last.

Similarly, Mike Kinski's abrupt and — to the outside world — unexpected departure as chief executive of Stagecoach is being interpreted in some quarters as a sign of the group's diminishing status in the stock market. It's being interpreted as a lot of other things, too, but there's more kudos attached to being second in command of a FTSE100 company than one that's orbiting halfway towards 200th place.

The workings of the stock market, and the decisions taken on behalf of the institutions we trust to keep us comfortably off at the end of our working lives, may appear baffling. They may also defy what we think of as logic. But they are part of the capitalist system by which our lives function.

So we have to accept that investors' view of the public transport industry is the one that determines much of the industry's future. While the stocks were heading into the dizzy heights, that view was possibly as unrealistic as the pessimistic view may appear today.

Then, the City appeared to believe the groups' growth prospects were infinite; companies which had grown by acquiring, rationalising and injecting entrepreneurial spirit and innovation into privatised bus companies could, it appeared, walk on water. Investors were happy to back the groups' acquisitions of smaller UK bus companies, they certainly were not greatly bothered if the competition authorities delivered a rap across the groups' knuckles and they were happy to let them diversify when they ran out of sensibly-priced bus companies to buy. Hence trains. Hence foreign bus companies.

They also were in awe of the more charismatic individuals within the groups. Unquestionably of Brian Souter at Stagecoach who, equally unquestionably we would argue, has done more than anyone to reshape and invigorate the bus industry over the past 20 years. Almost certainly also of Colin Childs who, until he left last autumn in pursuit of the chance of running his own company, was National Express's financial director.

The upshot of all this was what hindsight suggests was an over-rating of the transport groups' ability to perform. An apparent assumption that, just because they could run efficient UK bus companies, they could achieve similar results with buses in heavily regulated European markets or within the strictures of the rail industry. And as soon as they realised that those other businesses were delivering less exciting results, they jumped ship.

You may scoff that the rescue boats all appear to be companies with dot.com in their title — internet ventures, some of which might never make a penny, cent or sou of profit — but a belief in the infinite applications of the 'net has entranced investors, and their infatuation with these soaring stocks is helping push the transport sector and some of the best-known names in High Street retailing out of the big time.

One day, the fashion will change and internet stocks will be deserted for something else, but for now the transport groups must function in a market with less ambitious expectations for their future.

That may be no bad thing. Brian Souter is already on record as saying Stagecoach should place more importance on long-term growth of its core market and less on the City's short-term expectations. If that sort of thinking permeates the industry, and management time is concentrated on strengthening companies more than pursuing expansion opportunities anywhere and at almost any price, then we could be looking to a much healthier future for British public transport.

Dot.com fever might keep the bus on a straighter road.



ALAN MILLAR

Above:

Metroline says its decision to accept DelGro's takeover bid was influenced by the fall in share values across the transport sector. Alexander ALX400-bodied Dennis Trident TA109 (V309 GLB) led one of the company's Dennis Dart/Plaxtons along Station Road, Edgware last October when Metroline was still the sixth UK quoted bus group. MARK LYONS

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

All articles, letters, press releases and colour photographs (we prefer to use transparencies where possible) should be sent to the Editor at: Buses, PO Box 3759, Glasgow, G41 5YN

Please send a stamped addressed envelope if you wish to have your photographs returned after use.

Fleet news reports (but not photographs) should be sent to the appropriate correspondents whose addresses are listed in the Fleet News sections.

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Cover:

Travel West Midlands Volvo B7L/Plaxton Presidents 4100 (V410 MOA), 4032 (V32 MOA) and 4102 (V102 MOA); 4100/2 show route branding for the Birmingham-Solihull corridor.

CHRIS MORRISON



PAGE 15

MPDs for TGM for H20



PAGE 20

B7L: What's it like to drive?
 JOHN CAMERON



PAGE 24

Arriva in Luton
 PHILIP LAMB



PAGE 55

Park's Paragons take to the road

CURRENT ISSUES

around the industry

Metroline sells to foreign buyer



Metroline, the fourth largest of London's six major red bus operators, became the first stock market-quoted British bus group to sell out to a foreign buyer when it accepted a £73.8 million cash offer in mid-February from DelGro, the majority owner of Singapore Bus Services.

Declan O'Farrell, Metroline's chief executive, and his fellow directors remain in day-to-day charge of the company which was sold to its management and employees in 1994 and was floated on the stock market in July 1997; in 1998, it acquired London Northern from MTL and diversified outside London by acquiring Scottish Citylink from National Express. It has around 900 buses in London, while Citylink contracts coaches from a range of operators.

However, Metroline was too late into the stock market to be able to take advantage of other acquisition opportunities. Indeed, when he commented the DelGro takeover as good value to the shareholders of Metroline, Declan O'Farrell commented: 'As part of a bigger transport group, we will be better placed to build on our achievements and realise our strategy of being a more broadly-based transport company.'

'We do not believe that this aim could be realised in the foreseeable future as an independent company in the absence of positive stock market sentiment.'

DelGro chairman Wong Hung Khim says Metroline will provide his group with 'a strong platform from which to expand our business interests in the rest of the United Kingdom and Europe'. Metroline was already interested in expanding into the rail market.

The takeover enlarges DelGro's global bus fleet to over 4,000 vehicles. It has a 75% stake in Singapore Bus Services, which operates over 2,700 vehicles, and is a joint venture partner in a 500-bus operation in Shanghai. In addition, it won a tender to operate a fully automatic underground heavy rail system and two light rail systems in Singapore and is an international taxi operator, with 4,500 cabs (and 1,600 rental and lease cars) in Singapore, four joint venture taxi operations in Chinese cities and is the largest black cab radio circuit provider in London through its ownership of ComputerCab and DataCab.

Above:
Metroline DML534 (T64 KLD), a Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart SLF, at Waltham Cross.
MARK LYONS

Left:
Singapore Bus Service's fleet of over 2,700 modern buses includes three-axle Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympians.



RURAL BUS GRANT TO CONTINUE

The government has pledged to retain the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant in England until 2003/04, with subsidies of at least the current level of £32.5 million a year.

Transport minister Keith Hill says the scheme paid for 1,845 new or improved services in 1998/99, its first year of operation and that at least 10 million passenger journeys were made on these services, the largest numbers of which are in Lincolnshire and Cornwall.

Meanwhile, Nexus — the Tyne & Wear PTE — faces resistance from villagers in Ryton, near Gateshead, to its plans to create a rural bus interchange at the village green. Plans for a similar scheme at Rowlands Gill were scaled down to appease objectors.

Volvo wins complete Dublin order

Dublin Bus has secured European Union funding to place orders for all 185 of the low-floor double-deckers and 20 articulated single-deckers for fleet renewal and expansion this year ('Fleet News' February). Eighty-five Alexander ALX400-bodied Volvo B7L double-deckers have been ordered in addition to the 100 already announced. The articles will have Wright Eclipse Fusion bodies on Volvo B7LA chassis.

NATEX DENIES ARRIVA RUMOUR

The oft-repeated City story of an imminent merger between Arriva and National Express Group surfaced again in early March, prompting NatEx to issue an emphatic denial that a deal was in the offing.

Were it to happen, it would create a combined operation with over 17,000 buses (around 10,000 in the UK), together with airports and seven UK rail franchises.

STAGECOACH GETS BACK TO ITS ROOTS . . .

In a surprise move, Stagecoach chief executive Mike Kinski resigned on 14 February after two years in the job. No official reason was given for his resignation, but it's been widely speculated that there was a major policy clash with executive chairman and founder Brian Souter.

Some substance was added to these suggestions by the appointment of Keith Cochrane, previously the group's finance director and — like Brian Souter — a former employee of the Arthur Andersen accountancy group, as the new chief executive. He has been with Stagecoach for seven years and is seen as much more of a Stagecoach man than Kinski, who joined from Scottish Power with a reputation for lean management methods.

In a parallel move, Larry King, the founder, chairman and chief executive of Coach USA — acquired last year by Stagecoach — has also left.

News of the management shake-up prompted a sharp fall in Stagecoach shares, although

some of the loss was made up within the next few days, but this came after several months when all public transport group shares have fallen.

In press interviews immediately after taking on the number two position at Stagecoach, Cochrane was quoted as saying he expected the group to concentrate more on developing its core bus and rail businesses, so it appears that it is open to acceptable offers for its stake in Chinese road toll company Road King and for Prestwick Airport, its only venture into the aviation market. There also has been press speculation that Stagecoach is prepared to sell up to 49%, perhaps even all of Porterbrook, its train leasing division.

The greatest part of Stagecoach's global bus operations are expressed by this one vehicle. Bluebird Buses 603 (M404 BFG), a Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M seen here in Aberdeen, acquired Coach USA fleetnames for a senior management conference held in Scotland.

MURDOCH CURRIE



. . . AND INVESTS IN CLEVER MARKETING

As part of its move away from meeting short-term City targets ('News' January), Stagecoach Devon managing director Russell MacDonald has been promoted to the new position of UK bus marketing director with a brief to develop the group's existing customer base.

He has been responsible for some successful initiatives in Devon which are likely to be considered for operation throughout the country. These include the Springboard ticket which, as a loyalty reward, allows any season ticket holder (including scholars) to be accompanied by up to three friends, family or colleagues for

50p each for any single off-peak journey; Springboard makes it possible for children to be accompanied by parents who may well not have used buses for many years.

Within the past two months, Stagecoach Devon has also introduced Chameleon family season tickets which have persuaded at least one family to give up its second car. With these tailor-made tickets, Stagecoach offers to come up with a price for an entire family or company's travel requirements. Each customer group is then issued with portraits of all of the people entitled to use it.

MTL BECOMES ARRIVA MERSEYSIDE

Arriva completed its acquisition of MTL Services in late-February and has relaunched MTL North as Arriva Merseyside.

Buses have already begun to appear with Arriva serving Merseyside fleetnames, or 'descriptors' in Arriva-speak, and there has been an overnight change of management, with MTL chairman Peter Coombes, chief executive Graham Roberts and finance director Colin Fuller all leaving the company. MTL North managing director Dominic Brady and his counterpart at the Merseyrail Electrics rail company, Roger Cobbe, report directly to Arriva's UK bus operations director, Steve Clayton.

On 27 February, a few days after the takeover was completed, the Merseyside Bus Club lined up 13 buses from each of MTL's nine depots and training school, together with three preserved Leyland Atlanteans in historic liveries. The 13 ranged in age from Atlantean trainer 1307 (DKC 307L) to Dennis Dart 7676 (V676 DVM), the last bus delivered new to MTL.

Shortly before the takeover, MTL announced plans to

introduce a 15 to 30-minute frequency of weekend night services in Southport, catering for the resort's pub and club-goers and building on the success of services run over the millennium night.

Below right:

Old colours, new name: Arriva Merseyside 0285 (N285 CKB), a Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II, displays its new identity in Chester bus station.

CLIFF BEETON

Below:

Preserved Liverpool Corporation Atlantean L501 leads the commemorative line-up at the city's Albert Dock on 27 February.

BILL BARLOW



NOW IT'S SHIRES AND ESSEX

Arriva has tightened the knot binding its two subsidiaries serving the counties to the northern half of Greater London. While it is keeping its The Shires and East Herts & Essex subsidiaries (already under common management with a unified fleet numbering scheme) as separate entities, it is changing the fleetname 'descriptors' to read 'serving The Shires and Essex'.

Before Arriva took over the old Luton & District company serving Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire was renamed The Shires. It had been intended to call it The Three Shires, but the possibility of parts of the counties disappearing into unitary authorities led to the more vague name being adopted. The combined operation also manages the separately branded Colchester and Southend fleets.

SHAMROCK SISTER'S NEW VENTURE

R. H. & D. T. Edwards, a sister company of Shamrock Coaches of Pontypridd, has acquired Venture Travel of Cardiff, a coach operator with 17 vehicles — six coaches

and 11 buses on contracted services. It also has a 40-vehicle garage which is attractive to this large south Wales group.

Buses Focus 14

Buses Focus 14 goes on sale on 14 April — but visitors to the Cobham Bus Museum Open Day on 9 April will be able to buy it there. It covers London Transport Today, with features looking at Metroliner, how Connex has set up as a newcomer to the London market, whether the Routemaster is still a good crowd-shifter, how good are London's low-floor double-deckers and takes a look at the London Bus Priority Network. Other features include Kingston as a local out-of-town centre and a pictorial look at the last year by Geoff Rixon.

Buses Focus 14 has 56 pages and costs £3.50.



Arriva Cymru has bowed to Office of Fair Trading pressure (December Buses) by modifying the livery of its buses on Flintshire's Linxx network from the purple also used by First Croydon to blue. JOHN YOUNG

METROBUSES: REAL IMPORTS AND A NEW CORGI DIECAST

Eleven years after it went out of production, the MCW Metrobus is still making headlines.

Ensignbus, the Essex dealer, has acquired 80 six-wheel 1983-89 models from Hong Kong and plans to return half of them to the UK for sale as either open-top sightseeing buses or as 106-seat school transport vehicles. The others will operate as sightseeing buses in Australia.

If your pocket doesn't stretch to the real thing but you're still a fan of the breed, the good news is that the Metrobus is the next new casting to be added to the 1/76th scale Corgi Original Omnibus Company range.

The next addition to the 1/76th scale EFE diecast range will be the 12m Wright Access-ultralow, Access Floline and Renown.

Bus People

The government has named **Anthony Mayer**, chief executive of the Housing Corporation, as transitional chief executive of Transport for London, the new body which takes over from London Transport and other bodies with transport responsibility in the national capital from 3 July.

Barry Pybis, previously managing director of Stagecoach East Midlands, has moved to National Express Group.

The managing directors of Mayflower subsidiaries Dennis and Alexander, **John Smith** and **Bill Cameron**, have been made chairman of these companies. Dennis director and general manager **Alan McClafferty** is now MD there, while **Jim Hastie**, former chief executive of axle and component manufacturer Albion Automotive, has become chief executive at Alexander. Also at Alexander, **Andy Greenway** has

joined from Marshall Bus to take up the post of northern area sales manager.

Mark Saxton has joined Arriva from Cadbury Schweppes in the new position of human resources director.

Brian James, First Western National's divisional director for Cornwall, has been made operations director for Western National and Red Bus. His career began in 1968 as a conductor with Devon General.

Richard Zarywacz has succeeded **Eddie Knorn** as press and publicity officer for the Routemaster Operators and Owners Association.

At the Confederation of Passenger Transport, **Simon Posner** has succeeded **David Watson** as director of public affairs. Mr Watson has retired, but will remain with CPT as a consultant on European affairs.

REGISTRATION NOTES

by David J. Stanier

The first W-prefix registration was reported to me on 4 February, in the form of both W-LFP and W-SBY. I think these are both AFRL issues rather than from local registration offices. V-prefix issues have been more closely organised than those for S and T, but nevertheless the current scene is difficult to analyse in detail.

Meanwhile, it has emerged that a minor adjustment has been made to the proposed layout of letters and numbers in the new system starting on 1 September next year.

This latest proposal envisages registrations along the lines of AB12 CDE, with AB in this example representing the location, 12 being a dating element and CDE a random combination in place of today's numbers.

No further details have been published, so any further interpretation at this stage would only be conjecture. It is not known whether the locational letters will be redistributed or whether the random letter combinations will follow a sequence of AAA, AAB, AAC and so on to YYY. The dating element — which has been expected to leave scope for cherished numbers to be allocated — may not necessarily be in sequence either, so the first live example will not necessarily be 01.



The first photograph to reach us of a W-registered psv was of W3 YRR, a Berkhof-bodied MAN 11.220 midicoach for Marshall, Sutton-on-Trent. GEOFF COXON

DIARY DATES

25/26 March

Spring Transport Festival, Manchester Museum of Transport, Boyle Street (next to First Manchester Queen's Road garage).

28 March

Omnibus Society (national meeting). Roger French, managing director, Brighton & Hove on 'Reducing car dependency'. 18.45, London Transport headquarters, 55 Broadway, London, SW1 (above St James's Park Underground station).

6/7 April

VIRGIL international conference on rural transport. University of Lancaster. Details from Alison Parker, Community Transport Association, phone 0161 366 6685.

8 April

Croydon Transfair 2000. Transport enthusiasts' and collectors' fair, 11.00-16.00, St Peter's Hall, Ledbury Road, Croydon, Surrey.

9 April

Cobham 2000 annual open day at Cobham Bus Museum, Surrey and gathering at Brooklands Runway. Sponsored by *Buses*, *Preserved Bus* and *Classic Bus*.

15/16 April

UK Coach Rally, Brighton. Main events on 16 April at Madeira Drive on seafront.

A full listing of rallies and events throughout 2000 was published in the special supplement in March Buses.

ADVERTISING IN BUSES

All advertising sales for *Buses* and the complete Ian Allan transport magazine portfolio are now being handled by the T. G. Scott agency, based at Brettenham House, 10 Savoy Street, London, WC2E 7HR. The contact for *Buses* and *Preserved Bus* is John Eaton, phone: 020 7878 2317, fax: 020 7379 7118, or e-mail: john@tjscott.co.uk.

The photograph of a Blackpool Optare Solo on p6 of last month's *Buses* was by Paul Wigan and the photograph of Stagecoach Selkent TA139 on p15 was by Lee Whitehead and not Geoff Rixon.

THE FENTON FILE

MIKE FENTON considers the highs and lows of a particularly unusual Plaxton Paramount

Centre stage is taken this month by another unusual Plaxton Paramount. Throughout production of the Paramount I and II, several options were available. The buyer could choose between the 3.2m 3200 or the 3.5m high 3500 with its greater luggage capacity. There also was the option of accepting or rejecting the short 'feature' window towards the front and, depending on the chassis ordered, you could either have a normal or a low driving position.

Where buyers specified the low driving position, a deeper windscreen was required and this was usually combined with the 3200 body to create the illusion of a high-floor coach without the drawbacks. So most Paramounts had the feature window and normal driving position. But there were exceptions.

A perfect example is TXI 6342, a Scania K112CRS first registered by the Co Durham independent, Armstrong of Ebchester, in May 1986 as C180 ONL; by the time it was photographed eight years later, it had moved on to Ingfield-Northern Rose of Keighley, by then a Blazefield subsidiary. This coach, unusually, combined the low driving position with a 3500 body.

In addition to this coach, the same permutation was also built on 12m DAF SB2300, Leyland Tiger and Volvo B10M chassis. I don't know the exact numbers of each type, but I can safely say that this is the only Scania version I've ever seen. Do any readers know more?



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- Sunderland Metro aims to win back 'lost' business
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Volvo down and Irisbus goes up in 1999

Figures from two of the biggest players in the global bus market show a marked difference in their performance in Europe.

Volvo, which hopes to complete the acquisition of Scania from mid-April, delivered 9,500 buses and coaches last year, down 6.9% on 10,200 the previous year; the fall would have been 17% had Volvo not also acquired Canadian bus builder NovaBUS and Mexican bodybuilder MASA in 1998.

The American ventures help account for a rise in the proportion of complete, bodied vehicles last year, from 38% to 51%.

North America remains Volvo's greatest land of new opportunity, with sales up 26% by value last year, against just 5% in Europe where — despite a 6.3% growth in the bus & coach market in the five largest European countries — it was hit by severe competition and delays in launching the B7L double-decker. Sales fell 37% and 40% respectively by value in Asia and South America.

The B7L effect may explain why Volvo's order backlog at the end of last year was 12% higher than at the end of 1998.

Irisbus, the Iveco/Renault joint venture, ended last year ahead of forecast with 6,794 vehicles (3,114 coaches, 1,845 buses and 1,835 minibuses) sold in the five major European markets of Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Spain which account for over 80% of the total 15-country EU market. Irisbus supplied a further 1,987 vehicles to 15 countries outside the five.

Across the five, Irisbus (with 26.4%) was second only to DaimlerChrysler's Evobus; it was market leader in France, Italy and Spain, but did least well in Germany and the UK. Evobus (with 54% of the market), MAN and Neoplan dominate their home

market for urban buses so much that Irisbus's most successful models in Germany were the Renault Iliade coach (77 units) and the Iveco Daily minibus (86 units).

In France, where booming coach sales helped the market grow by 9.6% on 1998 to 5,316 vehicles, Irisbus supplied 52% of coaches and 71.7% of buses. Renault and Heuliez-badged vehicles led every sector and the Czech-built Karosa Recreo school bus secured 512 sales. Forward orders include 80 CNG gas-fuelled citybuses from Bordeaux and Montpellier.

In Italy, delays in releasing public funds for urban fleet renewal pushed bus sales down by 5.3%, but coach sales raised the overall market by 13.5% to 4,746 vehicles. Irisbus took 51.4% of the total market, but only 46.4% of the urban bus market where the Iveco CityClass did best with 31.3% of deliveries. Orders secured for this year include 55 CityClass for Venice and 50 for Turin.

Spanish sales totalled 1,126, giving Irisbus 28.7% of a market up 11% to 3,929 vehicles; 395 locally-bodied Iveco EuroRiders accounted for 20% of new coach sales and Iveco and Renault-branded buses made up 25.7% of that sector. The bus market dropped 20%, but Madrid has since ordered 113 Irisbus products — 61 Castrosua-bodied CityClass and 52 Hispano-assembled Renault CityLine.

Volvo has helped develop Prevost's XLII, the latest version of the Volvo/Henlys Canadian subsidiary's 15-year-old 45ft long, 8ft 6in wide Le Mirage. The stainless steel-bodied integral has a frameless bonded version of the previous model's distinctive short, yet tall panoramic windows; driveline includes a Detroit Diesel DDEC IV Series 60 engine and Allison six-speed automatic transmission.



State-owned bus and local rail operations in the central Netherlands, including the area surrounding Amsterdam, were amalgamated last year to form Connexion. The fleet of around 1,500 buses includes this articulated Volvo B10MA with Berkhof bodywork.

H. G. HARTEMINK

LIDLAW EXPANDS COACH INTERESTS

Laidlaw, North America's largest bus and coach operator, has acquired Hotard, an 83-vehicle operator based in New Orleans.

The acquisition takes Laidlaw's coaching interests (as opposed to its much larger school bus fleet) to 3,300 vehicles. These include the Greyhound scheduled coach fleets in the United States and Canada; Laidlaw's coach fleet is second in size to Stagecoach's Coach USA operation which has over 5,000 coaches in addition to at least as many shuttle vans and taxis.

By comparison with the two market leaders, the acquisition of an 83-vehicle operator may seem insignificant, but the North American coach industry is still characterised by small fleets which the big two want to buy. According to a listing in *Bus Ride* magazine, only Coach USA and Laidlaw operate over 1,000 coaches; six others have over 200 coaches, nine have between 101 and 150, and the 50th largest fleet — Annett Bus Lines of Sebring, Florida — has 51.

BERLIN LEAPS BACK TO 1941

Forget the non-existent millennium bug. Berlin's public transport operator, BVG, hit a leap year problem on 29 February when over 1,000 of its Ibis ticket machines refused to recognise a date that only comes round every fourth

year. Some machines jumped to 1991, 2001 and 2010, while the spookiest experience reported by one passenger was to receive a ticket dated 1 January 1941 when Berlin was just 16 months into World War 2.

MAN is back in the USA

MAN is the latest European manufacturer to compete in the United States transit bus market. It is re-entering this increasingly competitive arena in a joint venture with Thor Industries, manufacturer of Eldorado National and Champion small and midi coaches.

It achieved some success in the early 1980s with a range of rigid

and articulated buses built at a factory in South Carolina, before pulling out apparently through concerns about the financial implications of American product liability legislation.

With this joint venture, buses — probably with a combination of German axles and American engines — will be built in a new factory in California.

CALIFORNIA CONTEMPLATES DIESEL TRANSIT BUS BAN . . .

Authorities in California are considering banning diesel transit buses by 2009.

While the California Air Resources Board is considering stopping short of such drastic action and allowing transit agencies to operate buses with low sulphur diesel, there is a strong lobby in favour of the ban which would require a wholesale conversion to compressed natural gas (CNG) or trolleybuses.

Besides the fact that CNG buses are 17% more expensive to buy than diesels, one of the transit agencies' main arguments against a ban is that CNG buses also are heavier than US diesel buses which, themselves, are heavy by UK standards. A typical unladen 40ft CNG transit bus weighs in at around 15 tonnes and cause damage to the road surface.

Some bodies are prepared to delay the diesel ban until fuel cell technology is ready for production.

Reflecting Californian concerns about emissions, the state's Yosemite National Park is in the process of selecting a manufacturer to build a large fleet of electric buses to provide internal transport within the park. The US\$20 million funding for the project comes from the US Department of the Interior's Office of Flood Recovery.

. . . AS GAS BEATS BATTERY FOR SYDNEY OLYMPICS FLEET

Sydney Buses has opted for compressed natural gas, rather than battery electric power, for buses to provide a high profile during this year's Olympic Games in the Australian city.

The New South Wales government-owned bus operator already has 102 Scania L113CRL and two Mercedes-Benz O.405 CNG-fuelled buses and has taken delivery of the first 30 of an order for 150 CNG-fuelled, Custom Coaches-bodied Mercedes O.405NH models — a Volvo B10BLE-like solution which marries the front of a low-floor O.405N to the rear section of the step-entrance O.405; it also has an option on a further 150 CNG-fuelled O.405NHs.

Some are to be operated on the In-Village Transport System (IVTS) transporting athletes in the Athletes' Village and to and from the main Olympic site.

Originally, the NSW Department of Transport wanted to run a fleet of zero-emission Olymbus vehicles to the design of the prototype shown in February *Buses*, but trials during 1998 were so unsuccessful that the prototypes were returned to New Zealand where they now provide a city centre shuttle service in Christchurch.

Further to the February report, the Olymbus used a Designline chassis with MAN components.



A Dutch operator bought this Berkhof-bodied Scania K113 after the Q Drive group collapsed in 1998, then last year lent it back temporarily to the new owner of The Glider, the up-market tour company set up originally by Q Drive. It was photographed in York with its new Dutch registration plates.

DAVID LONGBOTTOM

SWEDES SWITCH TO SMARTCARDS

Three Swedish operators, Vastmanlands Lokaltrafik, Dalatrafik and Upplands Lokaltrafik, are replacing magnetic card ticketing systems on over 1,000 buses with Almex Smartfare smartcard systems; this is part of an initiative to make it easier for passengers to book through journeys between operators and between bus and rail services. The three operators' buses serve 60% of Sweden.

KIWI KSW SOLDIERS ON

One of the least likely old British double-deckers still running abroad is a former Wilts & Dorset Bristol KSW5G running 20-minute tours of the town of Taupo, on New Zealand's North island roughly halfway between Auckland and Wellington.

It was acquired 30 years ago by five young men who intended to take it on a world tour; the tour ended in New Zealand after 40,000 miles and three years, when they ran out of money and sold the bus. It was later used as a restaurant before being refurbished for its present role.



Its fleetnumber K5135 combines the chassis type with its lowbridge ECW body number.

The former Wilts & Dorset KSW5G operates within the small town on the shores of Lake Taupo, New Zealand's largest lake.

ALLAN WHITE

BERLIN BLOCKS MINIBUS PLAN

Berlin's city authorities have threatened to impound a Turkish businessman's minibuses if he goes ahead with plans for a network of cross-city routes, reports JOHN CAMERON.

In a move reminiscent of the ill-fated Amos proposals for London in 1983, Bülent Burma has announced his intention of running a fleet of 750 eight-seat minibuses on fixed routes, but no timetable and with a flat fare of DM1.50 (50p). The service would be operated on a similar basis to those in several Turkish cities.

Mr Burma has been quoted as saying that he does not require a licence to operate the services as most of the revenue for the minibuses will come from advertising on the vehicles' exteriors and broadcast on speakers inside the buses.

The authorities in the German capital have served notice that they are prepared to take drastic action if he starts the service, if necessary by impounding the minibuses. They say not only that he has not applied for the licences needed to run the service and have indicated, significantly, that his application

would be likely to be rejected, even though there is a legal obligation to allow competition with BVG, the city transport authority.

'It is not OK for an operator to run at low prices on attractive routes and then leave BVG with the rest,' says Petra Retz, transport spokeswoman for the city senate.

Mr Burma insists that he has discovered a loophole in the law which will still allow the minibuses service to start; he claims that he can operate without licences if fares are not charged at bus stops, if the vehicles are treated as publicity vehicles and not primarily as a means of transport, and if passengers book their travel in advance on the same basis as a private hire taxi.

Private operators have been operating some of BVG's services since 1991, on a similar basis to London Transport's tendered routes. Those services — mostly peripheral routes — are operated under the BVG name, with BVG's ticket machines and radios; typically, contractors provide the basic service on these routes, with BVG supplementing the service with its own vehicles at busy times.

Lübeck celebrates with a rally

The north German historic city of Lübeck is celebrating its 75th anniversary of motorbus operation on 2/3 September with an international bus show to be held at its Ratekauen Weg garage.

As there is a history of double-deck operation, Stadtwerke Lübeck and preservation group Verein Historischen Stadtwekehr Lübeck are keen to attract preserved and working British double-deckers to the event; those with platform doors will be invited to help provide a special service linking two bus stations and the garage.

For more details, send a large stamped addressed envelope, please, to Peter Hoskins, 36 Weall Court, School Lane, Pinner, HA5 5PG.



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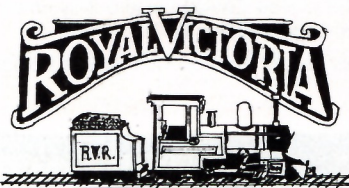
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THE DEEPEST HOLE IN LONDON?

Does London Transport Buses appreciate just how deep a hole it is digging for itself over the Harris Bus affair?

Having denied it was seeking an operating licence for itself, it subsequently applied for one, as London Buses Ltd. The plan is to operate the six main routes with the ex-Harris Bus buses for the remainder of the original contract. It is negotiating to take over the lease of the Belvedere base (owned by the local council) on the Kent side of the Thames, but will not attempt to run the Ilford area operation from West Thurrock; instead it is to reopen the mothballed Ash Grove garage in Hackney, which is still owned by LT. Negotiations are also in hand for it to take over the leases on the 65 or so buses required.

The first step was to put in local management to keep Harris Bus running while still under the receiver's control, a perfectly reasonable move bearing in mind that, at best, the receiver would only be likely to continue the business until a buyer could be found. If there was no buyer then, he would or should simply close it down and sell off such assets as there are.

The fact that he has continued to run it for so long leads one to suspect that LT Buses was providing some finance. The next step was to advertise in the local papers for qualified drivers, engineers and controllers.

Certainly, Harris Bus lost many more staff after the receivership was announced, leading to gaps in service and sometimes no evening service after about 20.30. Then route 150 (Chigwell Row-Barkingside-Ilford) ran only as far as Barkingside for a week or so in early February. However, later in February services seemed to improve on routes north of the Thames, and notices at stops announced that 'due to an improvement in the staff situation, the company is now able to operate the major part of its timetabled services . . .' But one route that certainly hadn't improved was cross-river 108 (Stratford-Lewisham), with cuts often affecting two buses in a row.

It has been widely reported that the unexpired portions of the tenders for all the routes were offered, on the same terms as before, to other contractors, but not surprisingly none was interested. The operators were apparently also told that, if they took over, they would be liable for the financial penalties for journeys not operated because of staff shortage, a decision hardly likely to encourage any potential bidders.

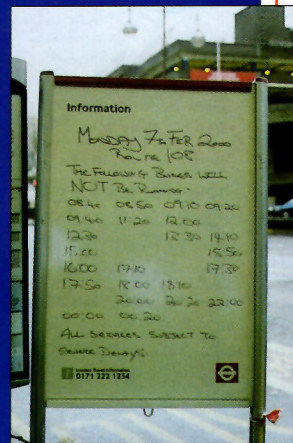
Figures bandied about elsewhere show that, between April and September 1999, Harris Bus lost over £300,000 on the six main routes, with only 13-bus route 180 (Lewisham-Thamesmead) making a profit of around £30,000. Against this, the worst performer was 11-bus route 150 which lost of over £110,000: no doubt that was why it was cut short for a time. The total overall loss was made on a revenue of nearly £3 million — a figure struck after deductions of penalties for lost mileage.

But the whole move raises some serious questions about how a regulatory body can also run its own buses. There are legal precedents for this, but in theory once London Buses starts running East Thames Buses or whatever it is called, it should be liable to make penalty payments for missed journeys or other deficiencies to LT Buses. Will this happen?

And what about rates of pay? If East Thames does not have to make a profit, then it can afford to pay higher wages than other operators, and might poach staff from them. Do these operators then get penalised if they miss journeys on their routes because staff have left to join East Thames? And what happens to staff at the end of these contracts? Normally an operator can expect to win at least some of the new tenders for its routes, but here there will be no chance.

And then there is the little matter of reopening Ash Grove garage: who is paying the (modest) cost of refurbishment? It is a big garage, in which 40 or so buses there will rather rattle around. That may not matter, except that in south-west London, I hear that London United has been trying unsuccessfully to get LT to let it occupy more of Fulwell Garage, half of which is walled off, and was once the home of London Bus Sales. Now TGM Buses is ensconced over the wall but probably does not need all the space, whereas London United is having to park buses in the roadway outside, where they are subject to vandalism.

Harris Bus routes in the Ilford area may be doing better, but things were not so good on cross-Thames 108 in February.
JOHN ALDRIDGE



THE LAST TWIST IN THE ROUTE 60 SAGA?

Just when you might have thought the saga of route 60 had run its course, comes news that the Streatham-Old Coulsdon service is changing hands again.

Should you have missed the shenanigans of this time last year, let me remind you that the 60 was operated by Arriva London South until retendering saw LT Buses award the new contract to Capital Logistics which then tried to pass it on to the short-lived Omnibus London/Driver Express company; a ragbag of elderly buses was drafted in to keep the service

going until Capital Logistics finally took delivery of its low-floor DAF double-deckers — supplied, ironically, by another part of Arriva.

Soon after, the newly-formed Status Group took over and the bus routes came under Tellings-Golden Miller control. It's since been reported that the 60 was losing money and now comes the final twist. Guess who took over the service on 4 March? Arriva London South, from the former Londonlinks depot at Beddington Lane. *Plus ça change . . .*



T130 AUA, one of Capital Logistics' DAF DB250/Plaxton President double-deckers, in High Street, Croydon last autumn.
MARK LYONS

Wages problems remain

The problem of low wages for London bus staff is unlikely to go away. An announcement in mid-February by the Transport & General Workers Union revealed that an independent arbitrator had awarded around 6%, backdated to 24 April last, to First CentreWest platform staff.

The award is based on an offer made by the company last November and there are to be more discussions on a new grading structure. There will also be more scope for staff to progress up the grades, and a compensatory 'non progression' payment for staff who have been with the company since before privatisation.

In his decision, the arbitrator said the roots of the dispute lay in the 'short-term perspective of the tendering system operated by London Transport . . . Bus operators are offered little scope to compete other than by worsening the terms and conditions of employment . . .'

Those are strong words, but on the other side of the coin Brian Everett, procurement director of LT Buses, has come up with an analysis of larger companies operating in London in 1998. It shows rising pre-tax profit margins averaging 11%, a much higher rate than in many other comparable companies, he says. In a letter to transport newspaper *Transit*, he added that the key issue was the 15% return on turnover (before interest and tax) sought by parent companies across the UK, irrespective of market.

He thought London bus operation was relatively risk-free, with guaranteed revenue for five years or longer linked to average retail price index increases. London operators, he said, had profit margins sufficient for them to be able to pay drivers the necessary wages to fill vacancies.

LOW-FLOOR VOLVOS — AT LAST

One might have expected the first of a large double-deck bus order of a new design for London to justify some celebration. But the handover of the first of 189 Volvo B7Ls for London Central and London General was exceedingly low-key.

No doubt, the fact that London's first B7Ls were ordered almost two years ago explains a lot, for although over 500 low-floor double-deckers were in service in London by the end of last year, all were on DAF or Dennis chassis.

London Central's first B7Ls are 46 with Alexander ALX400 bodies; the rest will have Plaxton President bodies. Because the vehicles were ordered so long ago, they have interior layouts to the original LT Buses specification, with a central straight staircase and only four conventional seats, plus three tip-ups, in the low-floor section.

Nonetheless, the interiors reflect considerable thought and innovation by the operators' engineers; some of the later deliveries will be for General, which has also ordered 13 Dennis Tridents. Like all new London buses, the cabs are air conditioned, but following successful trials in some Dennis

Darts, the driver's seat doesn't have air suspension as air has not proved so reliable.

Other features include a small tv screen (mounted above the windscreen) to give the driver a clear view of the exit doorway. Later monitors will have split pictures, half showing the doorway, half the upper deck.

A notable feature upstairs is their hard un-upholstered seats at the rear, the area most prone to vandalism. All other seats are covered in a bright multi-coloured moquette with a random pattern. It is intended to be easy to patch, as the pattern will make patches hard to spot. The seats themselves are more comfortable than many, with high, angled backs.

Below:

London Central Volvo B7L/Alexander ALX400 AVL6 (V106 LGC) in New Bridge Street, Blackfriars in early February.

MARK LYONS

Bottom:

London United has also begun to take delivery of Alexander-bodied B7Ls. VAX86 (V186 OOE), is numbered in the same series as the company's Volvo Olympians.

GEOFF RIXON



CONVIVIAL GATHERING AT CRYSTAL PALACE

There was quite a gathering of enthusiasts and experts at Crystal Palace the other Saturday, when Connex Bus UK began operating route 3 (Crystal Palace-Oxford Circus).

Distinguishing between enthusiasts and experts was difficult, as many were working as drivers for Connex. The company seems to have managed to recruit sufficient drivers, something by no means easy these days. But the offer of free travel on Connex trains as part of the pay package has probably been an attraction.

As well as its new Dennis Tridents with Alexander bodies, Connex is building up a fleet of other vehicles, including MCW Metrobuses and Dennis Darts. At least one Metrobus has crept on to route 3, but the other buses are for use mainly as weekend railway replacement buses.

This seems an obvious thing for a train company to do. But I hear talk of running the Darts on a bus service in the Haywards Heath/Lewes area in conjunction with Connex trains to assess potential demand where there are longer-term thoughts of reopening a closed railway line.



Connex's smart Metrobuses — including M140 pulling away from Crystal Palace ahead of two Dennis Tridents — could easily be mistaken for Metroline's.

JOHN ALDRIDGE

CROSS-LONDON POSSIBILITIES . . . AND THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE ROUTEMASTER?

The new *Lonely Planet Guide to London* describes London as a polluted place, a view apparently shared by one or two London boroughs. One council is apparently concerned about pollution and congestion caused by the large number of buses terminating around Oxford Circus.

I challenge this. Many Routemasters may indeed be found in the vicinity, but all London buses run on low-sulphur fuel. And many buses terminate there precisely because it is a major traffic objective. Lots of people want to go there.

However, a rethink is apparently going on in LT Buses' planning section, which may well see more routes extended across Oxford Circus. That is to be welcomed, if only because it will slow the unwelcome trend of shortening routes in the interests of reliability and timekeeping.

I fear that trend has become a fashion rather than a necessity, since some operators, by dint of good supervision and enthusiasm, manage to run long routes satisfactorily — like London Central's 36 (Lewisham-Victoria-Queens Park), now one of London's longest services.

Now there is talk of London General's 88 (Clapham Common-Oxford Circus) being extended at least as far north as Camden Town, in place of Metroline's 135 (Marble Arch-Camden Town-Archway) — the being a recent introduction, worked by low-floor single-deckers which replaced Routemasters.

And talking of Routemasters, First CentreWest has had its contract for route 7 (Russell Square-East Acton) renewed for another seven years. Crew-operated RMLs will remain for the present, except for evenings and Sundays when driver-only buses will continue.

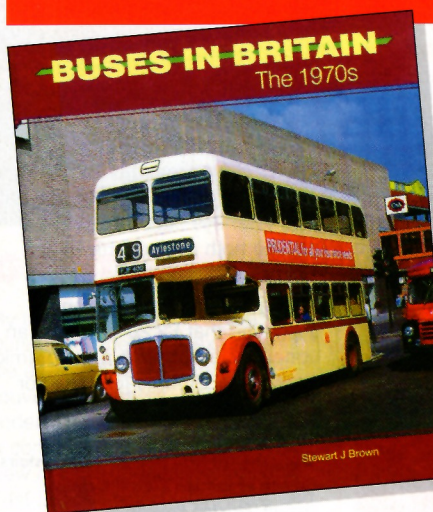
But LT Buses says that 'consideration is being given to using driver-only fully-accessible new low-floor double-deckers daily during the life of the contract'. Could this be the first of the present Routemaster-operated routes to go?

Another tender award will take 13-bus route 70 (Acton-Ladbroke Grove) from CentreWest to Thorpe's, with a five-year contract for new low-floor single-deckers. And Metroline keeps 14-vehicle route 186 (Northwick Park-Brent Cross) with the existing low-floor single-deckers for a further five years.



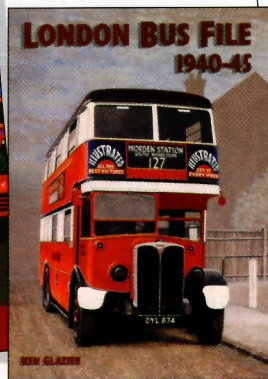
V307 MDP, one of Tellings-Golden Miller's recently-delivered Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts for LT route H26, at Feltham Young Offenders' Institution.
MARK LYONS

Capital Transport



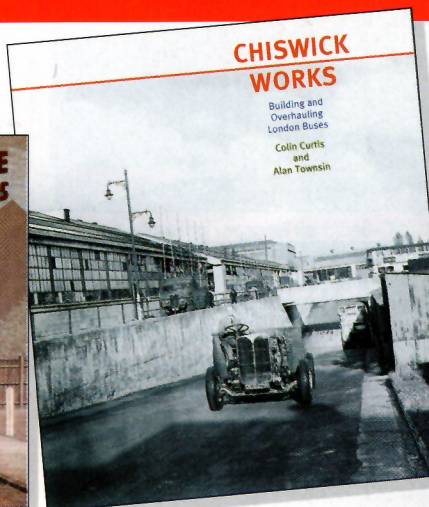
The latest Buses in Britain volume from Stewart Brown looks back 25 years by focusing on the mid-1970s. It follows the same style as the other books in the series with a chapter on each region accompanied by colour photographs throughout — a beautiful record showing how much has changed.

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The London Bus File series has recently been added to by this new volume covering the war years. In line with the other books in the series, it lists all the buses and coaches in London Transport ownership together with dates of entry into stock and withdrawal. Well illustrated.

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London Transport's Chiswick Works handled the overhauling of London's buses from 1921 until Aldenham took over the body overhauls in the mid-1950s. Pre-war it also built buses, including a number of experimental designs. This new book by Colin Curtis and Alan Townsin tells the story of the works.

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MILLAR'S *Tales*

THE EDITOR'S SIDWAYS LOOK AT BUS AND COACH EVENTS

Whatever happened to...? ...The Dartford Tunnel buses

As a break from looking at a development from 12 months ago, reader A. J. Bays has sent in this archive photograph of one of London Transport's TT-class double-deckers, almost certainly the only such creations (other than replica vintage machines) ever built on a Ford chassis.

The five Strachans-bodied Thames Traders were built getting

on for 40 years ago, in 1963, when the first of the twin bores of the Dartford Tunnel was opened. The idea was that pedestrians and cyclists, of whom there don't seem to have been nearly as many as the tunnel board and maybe LT had imagined might roll up, would be taken through the new wonder of the lower Thames aboard these impressive 16ft 4in high beasts.



A PARAGON OF VERSE

Another regular contributor to rise to Dennis's challenge to write the best verse about Plaxton's new Paragon coach is our good friend John Marsh.

He says he can't get his mind around Harry Barker's idea that the coach was ever named after Hull Paragon station and offers his own theory.

**Plaxton, builders of bodies so famed,
For designs, ultra-modern they aimed,
One was so virtuous,
It was never a bus,
So the Paragon coach it was named**

Time is running short if you still want to win Dennis's £50 prize, but get rhyming and send your entries into the usual address.

WRITE DIRECT TO MILLAR'S TALES

Please send any stories, photos (prints or slides), cuttings and other information on off-beat bus matters direct to:

Buses
PO Box 3759, Glasgow, G41 5YN

As Mr Bays reminds me, they had seats upstairs — reached by footholds leading to open platforms on both the offside and nearside — for 33 passengers; 23 cycles could be accommodated in open racks along either side of the lower deck, while no fewer than seven tandems could go in the back. Now tell me, dear readers, when did you ever see seven tandems in one day, never mind at the sort of frequency suggested by an allocation of five buses?

The picture shows instructor Pierce Inglefield and some of the drivers undergoing training at Dunton Green garage in October or November 1963, before the buses went into service from Dartford.

They didn't last long. Land Rovers towing trailers were used to replace them by 1966 and that was the last anyone heard of them, except that one was rescued eventually from a Shrewsbury scrapyard by Leon Daniels, managing director of First Capital. It was being restored on the then Capital Citybus's premises in 1992.

KINSKI: THE MOVIE

Had you dived into the *Radio Times* to plan your television viewing on 19 February, fiction might have appeared uncannily close to fact. For, just as news of Mike Kinski's departure from chief executiveship of Mrs Gloag's Wee Knitting Buses was emerging, the BBC's listings magazine offered a curious juxtaposition of tv movies for that afternoon.

From 11.30 to 13.20, you could watch a remake of John Ford's 1939 classic *Stagecoach* and follow it on ITV at 14.45 with what *Radio Times* judges to be the 'atrocious' and 'woefully unfunny comedy' *Mutiny on the Buses*. Could this in any way be a reflection of the events in a boardroom in Perth?

NOT SO CUDDLY?

My item last month about *guaguas*, the pet name for the buses of Tenerife, prompted Peter Johnstone to write from the hallowed surroundings of St John's College, Cambridge with some more information on the subject.

He consulted the 1931 edition of *Appleton's New Spanish Dictionary* which yielded a lot more information on this word than had the Millar family pocket dictionary for our recent visit. Apparently, not only does it mean 'an omnibus or streetcar' in Cuba, but it's a 'baby' in Peru and 'an insect that destroys fruit' in Mexico. Perhaps not so cuddly, then, and in Cuba *guaguero* also means either 'a bargain driver' or 'a deadhead'.

Incidentally, he referred me to a May 1962 *Buses Illustrated* article by V. H. Darling on his travels around the Canaries when, to his surprise and delight, he discovered the roads were alive with fascinating secondhand British single and double-deckers. One of the operators on Gran Canaria — in days when Iberia's inter-island flights were by Douglas DC-3 — went by the name of APJG which stood for Asociacion Patronal Jardineras Guaguas.

Destructive bugs apart, I still think we need a cuddly name for the British bus.

DEARER ON TOP?

Has Lothian Buses hit on a clever way of maximising the value of its largely double-deck fleet?

Its fares battle with FirstGroup has prompted it to top its rival's £1.40 cheap day return with a similarly-priced all-day ticket. Only there's still a £2.20 all-day ticket if your journeys start earlier in the day, so both are advertised on all vehicles.

But you could be forgiven for assuming that £2.20 buys you an upper circle seat with a panoramic view, while £1.40 is for sitting or standing in the stalls.

Two-class travel?: Higher fares upstairs on one of Lothian's latest Dennis Trident/Plaxton Presidents.

RICHARD WALTER



YOU NEVER KNOW WHO'S IN THE NEXT SEAT

One of the uncertainties about bus travel is not knowing who will occupy the vacant seat next to you. Will they insist on talking to you and unburdening themselves of a life story you really don't want to hear?

Well, it looks like you could be in for a more interesting time in Yorkshire, judging by our more recent postbag. First Mainline — hoping perhaps that we would like to pull the wool over your eyes in this April-dated magazine — sent us photographic evidence of just why, as John Lidstone reports in this month's 'Fleet News', the company could do with some higher capacity buses.

For the crowd photographed



surging aboard one of its 'Barbie' Volvos, armed with cut-price tickets, is led by none other than Posh Spice and David Beckham. Except it's actually Camilla Shadbolt and Andy Harmer who make a living out of impersonating their significantly wealthier lookalikes, and no doubt won't cost clients like Mainline the proportion of the price of a B10BLE that the real pair could charge for an appearance.

You can forget any idea of Posh at the Rotherham end of South Yorkshire, where your next-seat companion on Yorkshire Traction's Rawmarsh Circular could be scarier even than Scary Spice.

For reasons best known to somebody, Tracky launched its new Volvo B6s there with the assistance of one Dusty the Millerman who, Volvo assures me, is Rotherham United's club mascot. Just to reassure you, he's the one on the extreme left, beside Volvo's Thomson Baxter, Tracky's Steve Sanderson and Rotherham United manager Ronnie Moore.



GREETINGS FROM BIRKENHEAD

My thanks to Andrew Allison from Dundee for the latest example of the eccentric use of buses in souvenir postcards. Not, you understand, that anyone at *Buses* is complaining about such a fine view of Birkenhead Corporation East Lancs-bodied Guy Arabs and Massey-bodied Leyland PD2s

being sold as a memento of the Woodside Ferry terminal, one of the Wirral town's most memorable sights.

The pre-1969 view, into the era of the Morris 1100 and Hillman Hunter, is a clever one. By keeping so many images of Birkenhead in the foreground, rather than

focusing on the ferry itself, it has reduced the Liverpool skyline to a distant other world — very much as each side of the Mersey still regards the inhabitants on the other.

Any more, folks? Indeed, any better idea of when the photograph might have been taken?



The last word in depot cladding

Little did I know how much excitement that story about the re-cladding of the Singleton Street bus depot (or was it a bus station?) in Swansea was going to generate when I wrote it two months ago.

Should you be following this saga, Corus — British Steel of old — sent us a most unexciting photograph of the cladding used to turn part of the redundant depot into an extension of the adjacent Grand Theatre; then reader Richard Greenwood wrote from Swansea to argue that this was nonsense and that the Singleton Street site is still alive and well as Quadrant bus station.

Thanks to James Freeman, who worked for South Wales Transport from 1978 to 1982, and to David Jefferson from Swansea, I can set the record straight. The depot was Singleton Street Coach Station, a 1930s art deco structure used originally by United Welsh as its terminal when SWT worked its services from the street; it was replaced by the Quadrant site in 1979, but lingered on for three years as a bus park, save for a week in 1982 when heavy snow closed the new bus station and prompted the temporary operation of a limited service out of Singleton Street.

If, like me, you're an art deco fan, you'll be interested in David Jefferson's photograph of the cladding-free section of the building as it is now, showing where its innovative roof-level car park was and where the depot entrance was filled in.



20 YEARS AGO

In April 1980, we reported on the dawn of an Irish bus age that's now drawing towards its close. The birth of the Bombardier. Under the headline of 'CIE and Leyland part company' — the parting had come a good three years before when plans to buy Irish-built Van Hool integrals were announced — we showed our first picture of KC1, one of the prototypes developed by the FFG consultancy in Hamburg around CIE's desire for a driveline incorporating the Detroit Diesel two-stroke 6V71 engine and Allison transmission.

A double-decker had also been built, a single-deck citybus was to follow, and an agreement had been reached with Bombardier, the French Canadian manufacturer then best known for its railway cars and military motorcycles, to manufacture them in a converted piano factory near Shannon airport.

As our story related, CIE had by then re-powered over 70 M-class Leopards with horizontal Detroit, while another 16 Leopards and 10 Atlanteans had DAF engines and a further pair of Leopards had Cummins engines. Incredibly, some re-powered (and Leyland-engined) M-class Leopards linger on today in Bus Eireann's school bus fleet.

Plans were to start building the production coaches and double-deckers at Shannon later in 1980, with the first due in service by the autumn. Exports were to follow. Exports didn't, the first were a few months late and the venture subsequently passed on the GAC before coming to an end, after which Bus Eireann and Dublin Bus both bought Leylands.

The last Bombardiers could go this year.

MAP OF THE MONTH

BARRY S. DOE FCIT, C.Math, MIMA

Unlike the parallel changes in England where history was ignored, and some counties were swept away while several towns moved between counties, the 1974 reorganisation of Welsh local government created new counties with historic names like Dyfed, Gwent and Gwynedd. These also were large enough to make viable transport planning units.

Sadly, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it' wasn't a motto of the Local Government Commission which seemed to prefer 'It works and the public likes it, therefore it must be changed'. So, four years ago, seven Welsh counties became 22 smaller ones with generally pathetic names and no sense of belonging.

People love to feel they hail from a county like Devon, Yorkshire or Glamorgan. I'm a Dorset lad, but I doubt I shall never meet anyone who says: 'I'm a Rhondda Cynon Taff lad' — even in Welsh. South Wales suffered most, with counties named after their principal towns or valleys. 'Newport, Monmouthshire' became 'Newport, Gwent' in 1974, but is now 'Newport, Newport'.

A county surrounded by seven others

Some have long argued that the Cardiff Valleys should have formed Britain's eighth PTE. Nothing shows how even more desirable this is today, than when I say that this month's map is for a county that I believe is unique in Britain — one bordered by seven others. It would make a good 'Mastermind' question. What is surrounded by Blaenau Gwent, the City & County of Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen? Answer: Caerphilly County Borough.

The area takes in the Rhymney Valley railway line from Caerphilly northwards and the Newport-Ebbw Vale freight line

between Risca and Aberbeeg. In bus terms, it comes to the same thing: hardly any route lies wholly within it as all come from Cardiff or Newport and go to Abertillery, Ebbw Vale, Merthyr or Tredegar. A revenue support nightmare.

One side of the FWT map shows the whole area with all bus routes in green and, where a route goes outside the county, it is shown to its destination. In some cases where to do this correctly would imply making the sheet unnecessarily large (or reducing the scale) parts of routes wholly outside are shown as straight lines (like Newport-Pontypool). This is most sensible and extremely clear — and far better than merely having arrows off the map pointing to places not shown.

I confess I thought initially that the map had omitted Stagecoach Red & White's major X4/40 trunk route from Cardiff to Abergavenny. It should surely be shown between Merthyr and Abergavenny, joining Tredegar to Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr? A little research showed I was wrong. The county is only a little over two miles wide at this point, so the X4/X40 passes from Merthyr Tydfil County to Blaenau Gwent without stopping.

What is also excellent on this side is a small map of Wales with the county shown in red. An index gives a grid reference to places served, with an appropriate note where the place only shows up on a blow-up. There is then a frequency guide with a novelty: one column gives the end-to-end journey-time of each route. Incidentally the shortest is only five minutes (Glyn Williams's R3 from Risca to Fernlea); the longest is Stagecoach's X1/11 from Merthyr to Newport, at 135 minutes.

Good for journey planning

This list also shows how being able to plan on a larger scale would pay off: three routes with different operators have a number 1, three have a 2, and so on — yet no number between 12 and 19 is used and after 79 the next two routes are numbered 151 and 538.

This side is completed with details of the 10 bus operators and the adjoining counties, plus a panel telling users about the way the county supports bus services — to the tune of only £500,000 a year; not a lot, but this area is largely urban.

The reverse has blow-ups of Caerphilly itself, Risca and the urban area of Bargoed, Blackwood, Newbridge and Ystrad Mynach. These three areas make up over 50% of the whole county. Roads are green with reversed-out names and, as with the main map, railways, amenities like libraries, and tourist attractions are added.

Then comes another novelty: an additional index containing a section for each of the above six towns, with each section showing the bus routes that link smaller places with that town.

Finally, a panel shows the enquiry line (01495 235223) from which this map may be obtained (open 08.15-16.30 Monday-Friday only). Publicity-wise, Caerphilly stands head and shoulders above all others in the area and is to be congratulated for producing this map which I consider to be one of the finest in Britain. At the very least it should be a beacon many of the adjoining counties should see with embarrassment.

Below left:

Destinations off the map are shown as straight lines.

Below:

The frequency guide also gives approximate journey times.



FREQUENCY GUIDE TO SERVICES					
Route No	Route	Approximate journey time in minutes	Frequency Guide		
			Monday - Saturday	Sunday	Operator
1	Merthyr Tydfil-Rhymney-Pontypool-Dan-Bargoed	55	Hourly		SRW
1/11	Merthyr Tydfil-Rhymney-Pontypool-Dan-Bargoed-Tyberth-Valley-Mynach-Caerphilly-Machen-Newport	135	Hourly		NT
1	Suiford-Pontypool	15	30 mins Fri only		IBT
1/11A	Blackwood-Bryn Llafar-Mossycwmmer-Ystrad Mynach-Tyberth-Valley	40	Hourly		SRW
2	Abercarn-Bryn Llafar-Mossycwmmer-Ystrad Mynach-Tyberth-Valley	65	Hourly		SRW
2/12	Merthyr Tydfil-Rhymney-Pontypool-Philigstown-Abercarn-Bargoed	135	Hourly		IBT/HC
2/12A	Merthyr Tydfil-Rhymney-Pontypool-Philigstown-Abercarn-Bargoed-Tyberth-Valley-Mynach-Caerphilly-Machen-Newport	25	20 mins	Hourly	IBT
2/12B	Blackwood-Celtic Forest-Abercarn-Newbridge	25	Hourly	Hourly	IBT
2/12C	Blackwood-Oakdale-Crumlin-Newbridge	25	Hourly		IBT
2/12D	Blackwood-Springfield-Oakdale-Crumlin-Newbridge	25	Hourly		IBT
2/12E	Certain journeys divert to serve Penylan Industrial Estate	15	30 mins		IBT
2/12F	Blackwood-Llyn On Lane-Oakdale	60	Hourly		SRW
2/12G	Bargoed-Tyberth-Pontypool-Abercarn-Rhymney-Prince Charles Hospital	40	Hourly	2 Hourly	SRW/ST
3	Merthyr Tydfil-Pontypool-Abercarn-Rhymney-Prince Charles Hospital	55	Hourly		ST

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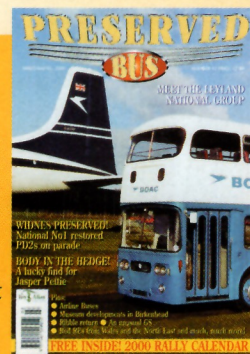
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ROAD TEST

IS THIS

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Volvo's low-floor B7L double-decker has been a long time coming. In the two years it took to turn the pan-European B7L single-decker's engine through 90° to create the short rear overhang demanded by British double-deck operators, the hitherto unchallenged master of this market sector lost ground to DAF and Dennis. With the Olympian, Volvo had the definitive double-decker of the 1990s. The delay to the B7L helped Dennis turn its Trident into the definitive low-floor double-decker for 1999, but the tide seems to be turning.

Since B7Ls began to be delivered to Travel West Midlands towards the end of last year, Volvo and partner bodybuilders Plaxton and Alexander have been working flat-out to fulfil outstanding delayed orders. So Travel West Midlands, London Central and London United have all been receiving them at a rapid rate and Volvo was proudly proclaiming that it had regained top place in the double-deck market for 2000 so far — although that was on the strength of just one month's deliveries.

But how good is it? How does it stack up in comparison with the well-respected Olympian? And will it be good enough to take some of the lost ground back from Dennis?

To get some first hand experience, we went to the operator with the longest operating experience of this still very new

model. Travel West Midlands has — or soon will have — 102, all with Plaxton President bodies, and the operator kindly made 4041 (V41 MOA) available to us to inspect and take for a lengthy drive out to Stourbridge and Merry Hill.

In recent years, TWM has turned away from double-deckers; its last bulk purchases were of Metrobuses which were delivered up to 1989, although 50 Scania N113s with Alexander bodywork entered service in 1991. But nearly all recent fleet renewal has been single-deckers, with the largest batch of Leyland Lynxes followed by Wright-bodied Volvo B10Bs, B6LEs and B10Ls and, most recently, integral Mercedes-Benz O.405Ns.

Need for more capacity

Yet with a thriving city centre in Birmingham, strong marketing and judicious use of quality partnerships, TWM is bucking the trend and enjoying year-on-year increases in patronage. Frequencies have been stepped up with single-deckers, and in many cases are up to five minutes on busy corridors, so the only way to meet the demand is to use higher-capacity buses. O.405GN artics are doing well on the Tyburn Road service, but double-deckers are a more straightforward answer.

4041 is based at Birmingham Central garage, which has the distinction of running almost every type of bus in this increasingly varied fleet. Among Central's services are the well-known 50, focus at one time of much competition and initial stamping ground of the Scania; now it's the preserve of the operator's first low-floor double-deckers, 22 DAF DB250/Optare Spectras, though a peak vehicle requirement of 22 buses means that B7Ls deputise fairly regularly.

Main haunt of the Volvos is the Hagley Road corridor, where they run alongside B10Ls to create higher capacity. They are on three all-day services, the 9 to Stourbridge and the 109 and 139 to Merry Hill, all taking in Halesowen, as well as the 19 to Hasbury, an additional peak-hours service introduced from January. Together these give a most impressive level of service; the first bus from Halesowen to Birmingham is at 04.28. By 05.00 it has settled down to every 10 minutes, with a five-minute service kicking in before 07.00. Even in the evenings, it is a 7/8min service, dropping down to 10min as midnight approaches.



STEPHEN MORRIS drives a Travel West Midlands Volvo B7L up hills and down urban dales to see how this much anticipated low-floor double-decker stacks up against last year's market leader.

THE NEW YMPIAN?



in the B7R coach. For a small engine, torque is quite good at 900Nm (670lbf ft) delivered over quite a wide speed range, from 1,080 to 1,650rpm. The radiator and intercooler are a massive unit on the offside of the engine bay.

Though TWM has preferred to specify Voith transmission since Metrobus days, it has experience of ZF in the B6LEs and O.405Ns, and the B7Ls also specify the ZF 4HP500 four-speed automatic with



Little engine, lots of poke

Officially, the B7Ls are designated B7TL, with 'T' for 'transverse engine'. They are built at Irvine, though production is scheduled to move later this year from the soon-to-be-closed Ayrshire plant to Borås in Sweden. They are 5.7m wheelbase chassis, giving an overall length of 10.55m. The engine is the Volvo D7C, an electronically-controlled Euro 2 7.3litre six-cylinder turbocharged and intercooled unit giving 158kW (215bhp) at 2,200rpm — a larger capacity version of the engine fitted

built-in retarder and an advanced electronic control system. This gives a Neutral Bus Stop facility (automatically selecting neutral when the handbrake is applied and restoring drive when it is released) and is designed to adapt to driving conditions — though disconcertingly lacks a kick-down facility as a result. It also lacks gearbox holds; there are just three buttons, one each for drive, neutral and reverse.

Under the floor, there is quite a lot of B10L about the B7L; it uses a similar

YOUR TRAVEL GUIDE TO...

9 Birmingham - Stourbridge
via Bearwood, Quinton & Halesowen

19 New service
Birmingham - Hasbury
via Halesowen (Peak Only)

109
Birmingham - Merry Hill Centre
via Halesowen & Colley Gate

139
Birmingham - Merry Hill Centre
via Halesowen & Old Hill

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STARTING 16 JANUARY 2000

Volvo/ZF AV130 portal drop-centre rear axle, and has a similar wishbone independent front suspension. There are two air bellows at the front and four at the back, all with electronic control, with a 70mm kneel at the front and a rear anti-roll bar.

Their 74-seat President body has 45 seats upstairs, all individual Callow & Maddox Urban 6s, and 29 downstairs; 16 downstairs are reached without a step, four are tip-ups — of which a rear-facing one behind the front nearside wheelarch and a forward-facing one opposite form the wheelchair space — and then two face inwards to create a buggy zone. One pair of seats behind the staircase faces rearwards. The rest are on footstools, and the gangway is step-free, though with a pronounced ramp to climb over the rear axle.

There is a straight staircase at the front, but unlike London buses, TWM's are single-door, so the staircase occupies front wheelarch space and does not lose seating space. Nonetheless, 74 seats is not a huge number in a 10.55m bus.

Opposite:

Travel West Midlands launched its B7Ls — or are they B7TLs? — on the Birmingham-Halesowen corridor. 4031 (V431 MOA) loads in Stourbridge on 6 November.
CHRIS MORRISON

Above left:

The driving cab of the B7L benefits from a new steering wheel and the amazing combination of an adjustable steering wheel and dashboard.
STEPHEN MORRIS

Left:

Sixteen lower deck seats can be reached without encountering a step.
STEPHEN MORRIS



Bodywork is built to the 2.55m maximum width and despite the low floor, overall height is 4.42m, or 14ft 6in according to the sign in the cab. They are about 3in taller than TWM's Metrobuses — which reduces route availability to some extent — and they tower above Central Garage's Spectras, even the 20 built to a greater height than the first two. Indeed the buses look inordinately tall and headroom on both decks is prodigious. Headroom is not bad, even on the step up to the rear seat; elsewhere downstairs, even the tallest passengers are unlikely to come anywhere near the ceiling. Upstairs, there is more than enough headroom for a six footer to stand up straight — with about 3in to spare, which must be some sort of record.

An updated Palatine?

TWM specified gasket glazing rather than the standard bonded glass of the President, which does rather detract from the smooth, sleek appearance of the standard bus. Indeed the overall effect is more one of a much modernised Palatine. Downstairs, the lower window line dips down between the wheelarches, which somehow emphasises the low-floor characteristic and gives plenty of light to the lower saloon. Upstairs too, there is a sense of lightness and space. Window spacing is varied, with a short bay in the middle adding to a rather cluttered exterior.

The most recent B7Ls carry a modified livery; the blue and red stripe which dives downwards has been moved forward to allow for advertising space.

As with most modern buses, the B7L's driver is faced with an amazing amount of adjustment to his or her workspace, with a seat which moves back and forth, up and down and with a reclining back. The steering column adjustment is quite novel;

it is controlled electro-pneumatically and a switch on the dashboard gives you five seconds to adjust the driving position; the steering wheel adjusts for rake and reach. The dashboard is attached to the steering column, so when you move the steering wheel, the dashboard moves with it. That way, you don't have to compromise between a comfortable driving position and being able to see the speedometer or warning lights.

The cab is completely new, and at last that steering wheel which Noah used to use to steer the Ark has been replaced by one a bit more fitting for the 21st century. It's rather smaller than the old Volvo one, but not as small as Dennis uses, and has a nice chunky feel and a padded rim. Volvos have always been good to steer, and the new one makes it even more pleasant.

Starting uses Volvo's usual slightly odd combined light and ignition switch, plus a separate starter button, and when you switch on the electrics the dashboard lights up like the Starship *Enterprise*. Hopefully everything goes out again, bar the handbrake warning light, otherwise you call a fitter and hope he has a degree in astrophysics.

There is a multi-function computer, controlled from a switch on the windscreen wiper stalk, which for the most part simply gives the driver a digital clock on the dashboard, but it can tell you all sorts of things you never knew you needed to know. The other surprising fitting is cruise control, but this is hardly appropriate on an urban service bus and is being removed.

Switch gear is laid out neatly on the dashboard, with interior lighting, heating and ventilation controls positioned in a logical order. The cab has air conditioning and interior heating is ducted at intermediate floor level, to the lower deck ceiling and upper deck floor. This gives a strange hot spot halfway down the stairs, and leads to a bit of a constriction on the staircase.

The ZF gearbox won't select a gear unless you depress the brake pedal, and the handbrake is handily positioned to the right below the cab window. Also there are the door controls — TWM specifies the ability to open just a single door leaf, so there are two open buttons and one to close. As often seems to be the case, these are positioned slightly awkwardly for a control which gets so much use in service — and kneeling controls are remote from them, on the dashboard.

Was the bus trying to reach Walsall?

From Central Garage, we headed straight into the centre of Birmingham. Whether it was the extra width or — more likely — the extra length over a conventional double-decker, I'm not sure, but somehow it seemed enormous and the rear wheels didn't want to go quite where I expected

them to, resulting in taking a kerb on a roundabout and having a fright when I thought I was going to take out the side on a parked lorry. Maybe this baptism by fire could have come later in the test, because after half an hour or so the bus seemed to spring back into the right shape and the back wheels really did follow the front ones and didn't set off on their own in the direction of Walsall.

Externally, that D7C engine sounds unrefined, but for the most part it is smooth and quiet from the cab. Power seems adequate from such a small engine; drivers used to Volvo B10Ls find the B7L is slow, and even compare performance unfavourably with the Ailsas which once ran in Birmingham and had even smaller engines from which the D7C is directly descended.

We had no passengers, but the engine coped well with the hefty unladen weight of 11,750kg. The sluggishness is partly down to a gearbox which changes up at low speeds, and the lack of a kickdown makes overtaking seem slow at first. I wanted to compare the B7L with the Oxford Trident I had driven a couple of months earlier, and despite the engine being one litre smaller, and being 30bhp shorter on power, it seemed much quicker to pull away. Roundabouts were no problem, even if you couldn't send Grannie skidding down the gangway.

Birmingham has some formidable hills, particularly out to the south-west side where we were driving. You could certainly feel the engine working hard, and on the steepest climb the turbocharger whistled away for all it was worth. Under heavy driving, you could feel a harshness from the engine. Climbing was adequate, if not stonking. Overall though, the little D7C was much more willing and refined than I had expected and gave every impression of being a much bigger unit.

The new electronic control on the ZF gearbox gives silky smooth gearchanges both up and down the box, though I felt acceleration might have benefited from it holding gears a little longer. But the smoothness of the changes was most impressive, even if it had a tendency to let the engine revs shoot up too high and then drop again on downchanges. The NBS facility worked perfectly, and drive picked up instantaneously when the handbrake was released; there was none of the delay in pulling away we had encountered with the B6BLE (*Buses* September 1999).

Ride quality is superb; there is no doubt that the Leyland Titan-derived independent front suspension gives it a real advantage over rivals with front beam axles. The electronic control of the suspension is good too; hit some of Birmingham's better bumps at a reasonable speed and there is no rebound; the suspension sorts itself out very quickly. Roadholding, as seems to be the case with all low-floor double-deckers, is excellent.

Visibility is good all round, though the microphone for the radio has apparently been moved as it obscured the offside mirror as delivered. The only problem is the side number box, which makes it difficult to see left at oblique junctions, as I encountered when emerging from Stourbridge bus station. At first, the framework for the assault screen gives you a wrong impression of the vehicle's width, but I soon got used to it. Mirrors are conventional and on the small side by modern standards, but are adequate.

Nice chassis, shame about the body finish

Most of my grumbles relate to Plaxton Wigan's contribution. The sliding window in the cab was very stiff and the handle on it seemed crude and flimsy. Then, despite the adequate heating and particularly the effective cab heater, a draught blew in through a gap at the bottom of the doors and straight into the cab through the open assault screen.

Once again, the whole drive was marred by a constant creaking and groaning from the rear partition of the cab, and sundry rattles from somewhere inside the lower saloon. How come a 40-year-old Routemaster doesn't rattle when nearly all

modern buses do? And perhaps as a punishment, senior staff from all bodybuilders should be forced to drive one of their products for a week; maybe then, someone would invent a cab partition that doesn't creak or rattle.

On Volvo's side, brakes are good and powerful (there are discs at the front) but require very delicate judgment to ensure that braking effort is constant; it's not the only vehicle I've driven recently that suddenly feels to be running away as you come to rest, leading you to overbrake. Moreover the brakes became very noisy on this B7L.

Overall, though, the B7L acquitted itself well. Internally, it is as practical as the Trident, though a glimpse under the bonnet suggests it may not be quite so simple to maintain. Refinement and performance were higher than expected. And an unsolicited comment from another Central garage driver, A. C. Jones, who joined us when we had a short break at Stourbridge, was that the B7L was the best bus he had ever driven. He agreed that the B10L was more powerful, but considered the B7L 'OK' in this respect. A few teething troubles, with vehicles refusing to start or giving false warnings, led him to question their reliability, though

very few were sitting in the garage on the day of my visit and we passed only one Metrobus standing in on a Hagley Road service — and it was standing in for the bus we had borrowed.

Volvo is billing the B7L as the Olympian for the new millennium; the Olympian has left it a tough act to follow, but early indications are good.

Opposite:

A straight staircase rises over the front wheelarch, so it doesn't intrude upon the lower deck to the same extent as on London's first low-floor double-deckers.

STEPHEN MORRIS

Below:

Rear view of 4023 (V423 MOA) in central Birmingham, showing the small downstairs window necessary because of the massive radiator and intercooler unit on the offside of the engine bay.

JOHN CAMERON

Inset:

The tall bodywork means even top deck passengers enjoy generous headroom.

STEPHEN MORRIS



LUTON & Unite

They don't spring to mind as twin towns. One a Roman fortress that grew into a cathedral city and county town of Devon, the other a Bedfordshire town whose prosperity was founded first on hat-making, later on the motor industry. One has a small regional airport, the other a booming terminal which — unofficially at least — promotes itself as London's fourth airport. Exeter is home to nearly 100,000 people, Luton to over 160,000.

In bus terms, one is served by Stagecoach, the other by Arriva, but they both have one major piece of bus history in common. Until 30 years ago, each had a corporation bus service and both lost them to the then recently-formed National Bus Company in 1970 after years of co-operation with NBC's two main predecessors.

On 1 January 1970, United Counties paid £294,824 for the loss-making Luton undertaking, complete with 77 buses — 47 lowheight or lowbridge double-deckers (two of them withdrawn), 30 single-deckers (some of them G and H-registered Bristol REs and LHs which had yet to enter service) — some service vehicles, an inventory of spares, ticket machines and uniforms; it also negotiated the temporary use of the corporation's Bute Street offices and Kingsway garage and workshop. When you consider the subsequent effects of inflation generally, and especially upon Home Counties property values, that 1970 sale price helps you appreciate what a bargain the employees of Luton & District got in 1987 when they bought their 240-vehicle company — including the old corporation services — for £1.7 million.

The Exeter sale followed on 1 April 1970, when Devon General paid £190,000 for a fleet of 65 buses — 55 double-deckers and 10 single-deckers — together with a route network reputed to have been losing £25,000 a year, and a former tram depot in Heavitree Road which survived until enlarged city centre premises opened



in 1973. The corporation's losses could, no doubt, be put down to many factors, but at the time of the takeover it only had 10 one person-operated buses (five Leyland Leopards and five Panthers, with seven more Panthers on order) and a substantial proportion of the smartly-presented fleet — including five 22-year-old all-Leyland PD2s — only operated at peak periods.

Hanging by a thread

Both corporations sold out at a time when, including the first four newly-created PTEs, there still were 74 council-owned bus undertakings in the British Isles. Their

demise followed several years of hanging precariously by a metaphorical thread and, certainly in the case of Exeter, was prompted in part by the fact that NBC was able to offer the council employees an acceptable pension scheme which had not been available before when Devon General was part of BET.

Their bus operations had replaced trams; Exeter's trams had been operated by the corporation since 1905 and were replaced by buses in 1929-31, while Luton's came into municipal ownership in 1923 and were replaced within the month of March 1932. At the time, Eastern National — then the Tilling Group company operator serving Luton — had bid unsuccessfully to take over and replace the trams. A potential battle was set for the following year when both operators wanted to acquire a significant independent in the area, A. F. England, but an agreement was concluded instead for Luton to take over the local routes (taking it into neighbouring Dunstable) and for Eastern National to operate those running farther afield.



EXETER

d by heritage

These two English towns may be 200 miles apart and have little superficially in common, but they share an anniversary of a fundamental change in their local bus services.

ALAN MILLAR explains the history and looks at what they're running now



Western National's Exeter operations) exactly 12 years later when small companies once again became fashionable. When United Counties got the same treatment in August 1987, Luton & District Transport was the appropriately-named and appropriately red/cream-liveried operator of the Luton, Dunstable, Aylesbury and Hitchin-based routes.

Minibus pioneers

The other radical change was the pioneering role both towns played in introducing high-frequency minibuses.

Devon General's celebrated introduction of Ford Transit on to Exeter city services O and P — continuing then, as now, the corporation practice of lettering rather than numbering its routes — on 27 February 1984 is widely regarded as the moment that the British bus industry discovered the traffic generating miracles that could be achieved when expensive, high capacity, low frequency double-deckers were replaced by cheap, frequent minibuses which could run deeper into modern estates. What is less well appreciated is that Harry Blundred, Devon General's managing director and the man who became the minibus's most devoted advocate, was sceptical about minibuses until the well-promoted Exeter experiment was proved successful.

What is often forgotten, too, is that Luton got in first. Only its minibuses were provided by Lutonian, an independent that had spotted the same weaknesses in big bus services and established itself before NBC absorbed the messages coming out of Exeter. Even though Luton & District introduced its own minibuses, Lutonian survived as an independent until 1998 when Arriva The Shires, as Luton & District had become, took over; by May this year, it will have had to sell 20-vehicle Lutonian to one of the potential buyers which have expressed interest, as a Monopolies & Mergers Commission investigation concluded that Arriva's competitive tactics had forced Lutonian's owners to sell out.

So, Lutonian apart, what sort of bus services operate in Luton and Exeter today?

Arriva The Shires' Luton depot — the company's second-largest and running a combination of what would have been corporation and NBC services 30 years ago — has 98 buses (50 single-deckers ranging upwards in size from Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts, 32 double-deckers and 16 minibuses) and 11 Green Line coaches on the London-Luton Airport express. Since 1988, the minibus total has stayed level, while the single-deck fleet has grown by 14, the double-deck fleet has dropped by 25 and the coach fleet by 10.

Stagecoach Devon, which bought Devon General from Harry Blundred's Transit Holdings in 1996, has 171 buses in Exeter running city, country and interurban coach services; most are Iveco and Mercedes-Benz minibuses, but 15 double-deckers operate tendered services taken on since Stagecoach took over, and there also is a growing proportion of Dennis Darts, both of the low-floor variety and some of the 14 ex-Citybus, Hong Kong models with step entrances and air conditioning which have been allocated to Devon General on their return to the UK.

Opposite above:

Preserved Exeter all-Leyland Leyland PD2/1 15 (HFJ 142) in Plymouth in 1975. It was one of the oldest buses taken over by Devon General.

ALAN MILLAR

Opposite below:

There still were green buses on Exeter city services last September, when this pair of Stagecoach Devon's Marshall-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 21-seaters was operating routes A and S. In Transit Holdings days, there were separately-managed units of green, blue and red minibuses in Exeter, with coloured destination blinds and route branding.

MARK BAILEY

Above:

One of Luton's oldest buses, a Duple-bodied Daimler CH6, dating from 1932.

J. F. HIGHAM

Post-war, both municipals grew closer to their big group neighbours. In 1947, Exeter and Devon General struck a deal to share all the mileage on a 50/50 basis within a 10-mile radius of the city; so, Devon General buses ran some city routes and Exeter's buses reached more distant places like Crediton, Exmouth, Cullompton, Budleigh Salterton, Whitestone and Bramford Speke, latterly using the few opo single-deckers.

On 1 January 1949, to avoid a dog-fight for the rights to serve new peripheral housing estates, Luton and Eastern National concluded a similar agreement — running for 21 years — for an equal share of mileage and receipts on all services within Luton and Dunstable and as far out as Lilley, Sundon, Toddington and Whipsnade. The joint network, publicised prophetically as Luton & District Transport and which prompted Luton to equip its buses with Tilling destination screens, continued after United Counties took over Eastern National's operations west of Essex in 1952; by 1965, it encompassed 29 services with a total route length of 82 miles. The agreement expired on the day United Counties took over from the corporation.

Since then, there have been dramatic changes in both towns. The first, most obvious one, saw Luton's red buses repainted in their new owner's green, while Exeter's buses remained in municipal green for a time, succumbing after a few years to NBC poppy red. NBC reorganisation turned Devon General into a division of Western National in January 1971, but it re-emerged as a separate company (this time including

Nigel Eggleton, Arriva The Shires' commercial director, says there has been a single-figure percentage growth in bus travel in many parts of the Luton area in recent years. He puts that down to a combination of factors: population density, lower car ownership levels than in other parts of the Home Counties, an attractive senior citizens' concessionary fare which generates off-peak travel, and the attraction of the recently-refurbished town centre Arndale Centre, once Britain's largest covered shopping area.

Not appalling territory

Most of Luton's growth in size since 1970 has been to the north and includes estates which, in Nigel Eggleton's carefully considered language, is 'not appalling bus territory'; in other words, there may not be too many natural bus passengers, but the developments are not all four-bedroom, two-car households who would sooner die than see themselves catch a bus.

He believes that, over the years, Arriva and Lutonian succeeded in generating additional bus travel in Luton as Arriva did best on the main corridors while Lutonian ran deeper into housing estates.

Today, he says most corridors enjoy at least one bus every 10 minutes in the daytime, with the Dunstable Road between the adjoining towns having 28 per hour; most services are commercial for most the time, with 70 to 75% of evening and Sunday services being tendered in some way. 'I imagine they would be likely to remain so,' says Nigel Eggleton, 'but we hope we can get a greater commercial presence, for example if there is a continued growth in Sunday shopping and in leisure developments.'

He also recognises that, especially as joint ticketing deals (like the Arriva/Thameslink deal giving rail passengers unlimited off-peak travel by bus) are generating more use of buses by train commuters, there is a need to improve commercial frequencies in the earlier part of the evening. 'I believe we need to improve frequencies from 18.00 until around 20.00, particularly if we want to attract a greater share of the rail network; 18.00 is too early for many people coming home.'

Part of the recent growth, he believes, has come from investment in improved service standards and the introduction of better presented and more accessible buses. The MPDs replaced much older, cramped Mercedes-Benz minibuses, and were targeted quite deliberately on routes which were already showing growth. Around the same time, eight low-floor Wright-bodied Volvo B10BLEs replaced Sapphire-branded Scania L113s on the 31 Dunstable-Luton service. And one of

the next big moves, in June, will be to replace the company's last 12 Bristol VRs with the same number of Alexander-bodied Dennis Trident double-deckers which will be dedicated and branded for route 38 (Luton-Dunstable via Houghton Regis).

Farther in the future, there is a possibility that the Luton-Dunstable rail route will be reopened as a guided busway with deviations to serve places like Houghton Regis.

In Exeter, much of the big time growth occurred as minibuses replaced double-deckers on city services. More recently, as Stagecoach Devon operations manager Rufus Gardiner admits, passenger figures have been levelling off, but a range of marketing initiatives (see 'News' this month) is being used to generate further expansion. Something that sets Exeter apart from other similarly-sized provincial cities is the level of off-peak commercial services provided by Stagecoach Devon. Most city routes enjoy 15-minute frequencies up to midnight and on Sundays, thanks to the pattern set under Transit Holdings.

You get what you pay for

The other side of the coin is that fares are among the highest in the country, a legacy from the earliest days of NBC after Devon General and Exeter Corporation's fares were raised to Western National levels. Rufus Gardiner says newcomers to the city — especially students — do sometimes complain about the fares, but he adds: 'We don't get a bad press about it. Our argument is that you get what you pay for and most people accept that we provide a very good network.' The fares levels may also explain why Transit Holdings was able to make a success out of minibuses when other operators struggled to break even with 16-seaters.

Even so, Stagecoach has replaced all of the Transits and Ivecos it inherited four years ago with new and cascaded higher-capacity rolling stock which has eased some of the overcrowding on the busiest services. This includes two-door Mercedes 709Ds from Oxford, but despite the slight passenger-flow benefits of using them in

Exeter High Street, they are likely to be replaced in time with single-door vehicles. The fleet, inevitably, is less varied in colour, as Stagecoach's corporate style has ousted the separate units of red, blue and green minibuses which Transit deployed in the city.

The High Street is bus-only, and was subject to a 24ft length limit to minimise visual intrusion. More recently, the limit was increased to 28ft to accommodate the Euro 2-engined Mercedes Varios operated on the three-site park-&-ride services introduced in the city.

So 30 years on, the bus appears to be doing better in both Luton and Exeter than in many other parts of the realm. How they would have fared had the local authorities retained their buses beyond 1970 is anyone's guess, but given that there are just 17 council-owned bus fleets today, their chances of survival this far would have been pretty slim if they were already in trouble then.

Special thanks to Philip Platt of the Devon General Society for background information for this article.



Above:
Two Arriva The Shires Mini Pointer Darts meet a Lutonian Iveco in downtown Luton.
PHILIP LAMB

Below:
Stagecoach Devon is using Exeter's allocation of air conditioned ex-Hong Kong Citybus Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers on its busy Exeter-Torbay-Newton Abbot routes. Shown here is 734 (N734 XDV)
BRENDAN PLAINE



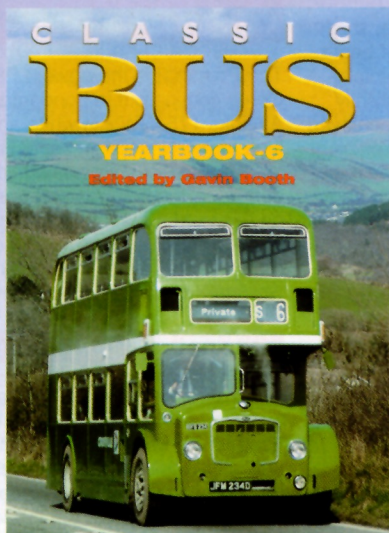
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BOOKS

THE PRESTIGE SERIES, NO. 4: LINCOLNSHIRE

**JOHN BANKS AND G. H. F. ATKINS,
VENTURE PUBLICATIONS, 240mm x 170mm,
64pp, £7.95**

The latest in this series of informative historic picture books covers another of the major fleets which veteran bus photographer Geoffrey Atkins has studied over the past 70 years from his home in Nottingham.

As John Banks explains in the introduction, Geoffrey Atkins's special interest has always been in bodywork and his huge collection of expertly taken photographs reflects that interest. Even allowing for some occasionally imperfect reproduction and a 45p price increase over the first two books in the series, this is a remarkable tribute to the Lincolnshire Road Car Company, with many shots capturing the atmosphere of the day as well as the vehicles themselves.

And what a joy it is to find pictures of moving buses in the mid-1930s, for even today many enthusiast photographers confine their activities to capturing quite lifeless stationary vehicles. Geoffrey Atkins learned his craft as a railway photographer by listening to the great names of the day; this rubs through to his excellently composed bus photographs.

ALAN MILLAR

CHISWICK WORKS — BUILDING AND OVERHAULING LONDON BUSES

**COLIN CURTIS AND ALAN TOWNSIN,
CAPITAL TRANSPORT, 255mm x 225mm,
88pp, £14.95**

Any book with Alan Townsin's name attached to it is well worth a close read, and especially one that covers London and AEC; add the extra ingredients of co-authorship by such a knowledgeable and experienced expert as Colin Curtis along with the high production standards and attractive price of a Capital Transport publication and you're looking at an exceptionally interesting package.

This is the definitive history of a unique institution in the history of the British bus, the west London factory which overhauled the capital's buses for most decades of the past century, but also built the vast majority of its prewar bus bodies and undertook research and development work unparalleled in the industry.

As Chiswick's most famous son, Colin Curtis has been able to work closely with Alan Townsin to give an authoritative insight into how the plant was organised, how it was adapted to meet the changes that swept across London Transport and its predecessors and to write about some of its more exciting projects — not the least of which is the Routemaster which he helped design and develop, and the stillborn XRM double-decker of the 1970s. Indeed, this story — illustrated with an excellent balance of LT archive

material and less formally taken photographs — is as much about the evolution of LT as Chiswick itself.

As you might also expect, Colin Curtis stoutly defends Chiswick and the whole concept of central workshops. It would be absurd to expect otherwise, and he argues that today's dependence upon outside engineering services could be undermining the development of better buses in the future. The modern, commercially-focused bus industry sees the world differently and argues that, although central works achieved wonderful things, they also prevented an efficient support industry from developing; and they might have stopped manufacturers from learning about the faults operators put right by themselves.

One day, we may discover who was right. In the meantime, if you want to learn more about this fascinating and now departed institution, there can be no more authoritative and affordable source in which to start your search.

ALAN MILLAR

THE TRAMWAYS OF EASTERN SCOTLAND

**J. C. GILLHAM AND R. J. S. WISEMAN,
LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT ASSOCIATION, 210mm
x 140mm, 74pp, £8**

The LRTA has based this, the first of two regional books on Scottish street tramways and the 12th in its national series, on part of a long out-of-print 1962 book part written by John Gillham. It provides potted histories, detailed maps, photographs and fleet lists of 13 tramway systems, including the city operations in Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh which, like many of the smaller operations, were replaced by bus networks still recognisable today.

ALAN MILLAR

DINKY TOYS

**DAVID COOKE, SHIRE PUBLICATIONS,
147mm x 210mm, 40pp, £3.95**

Many of today's model collectors cut their teeth, in a manner of speaking, on Dinky Toy buses. A classic, if ever there was, was its half-cab double-decker, introduced before World War 2 and running well into the postwar years. Then there was the half-cab single decker, a full-fronted single-decker coach, an early underfloor-engined Duple-bodied coach, and an observation coach. Nothing as realistic was generally available at that price level, and the later models of the Leyland Atlantean and the AEC Merlin weren't bad either.

While there have been some splendid books on Dinky Toys at prices to match, there has been nothing more modest. This Shire Album is therefore to be welcomed. It includes a fair number of illustrations in colour and covers the whole range, not just the buses. Nevertheless it manages to provide worthwhile coverage of the marque, and should induce a strong feeling of nostalgia in many of its readers.

JOHN ALDRIDGE

MODELS

1/76th SCALE CORGI ORIGINAL OMNIBUS DENNIS DART/PLAXTON POINTER 2

The Pointer 2 is the newest PSV yet modelled by Corgi, coming out in London dual-door pattern as AirLinks T75 WWV in white and grey with red and blue trim on Heathrow route H30, with liberal lettering as well as pleasing Johnston route details on the first nearside window. Rear lamps on this model are neatly trimmed in black, again to good effect, enhanced by accurate Dennis, Plaxton and Pointer decals. An excellent casting, well capturing the Pointer 2's more bulbous front.

TILLING GROUP BRISTOL L

The Tilling red/cream and green/cream Bristol L is issued without any decals at all — no adverts, fleetnames, fleetnumbers, registration numbers, indicator displays or legal lettering, so you may customise your model. Surprisingly, no choice of decals is offered with the model; you are directed to City Models in Ayr. Unlike previous issues (with decals) there is the bonus of front hubs picked out in silver. That said, these models will appeal to many because they allow you to have a local vehicle without the fuss of removing the factory-applied detailing.

PLAXTON PREMIERE/EXCALIBUR

Corgi's contemporary coach parc continues to be updated, with the excellent Premiere now available in Thamesway's recently abandoned yellow/green/white Arterial Express livery as Volvo B10M 606 (N606 APU). Really excellent Volvo/Plaxton miniature badges cap a superb representation of this one-off livery which became a memory just as the model appeared, with sale of the coach to nearby Eastern Counties on closure of the service.

Altogether more garish is the yellow/red/black Silverdale Executive Travel B10M M942 JJU, the livery complemented by interior curtains printed on to the inside of the glazing.

Unusually, there are unregistered Excaliburs with Volvo badging in the allover red Virgin Trains livery with silver/grey/white trim stripes and in GNER railway deep navy with red and gold trim, red curtains and white antimacassars. Prominent pre-fitted mirrors add effect to this model, which has no rear window fitted; the Virgin coach's all-black wheels look bland.

Other recent Premiere B10M castings are a well-executed Stagecoach Express in the shape of Fife Scottish 539 (R539 GSF), lettered for service X24 (Glasgow-Dundee), Bassetts of Tittensor's grey and grey-blue P885 RBF and Plymouth Citycoach P308 CTT in latest white, red and grey 'swirling' livery.

Other Excaliburs features Oxford Citylink blue, white and yellow 'flame' livery for its Oxford-London Express as 8 (R8 OXF) and F2 FTG in Flights cream, black and silver.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE

BUSES ON THE NET

Many old British buses are exported to enjoy new lives around the world. RICHARD DELAHOY uses the Net to track some down

One of the unexpected delights of a foreign holiday or business trip is to find a British bus — almost inevitably a red double-decker — when you least expect it. I well recall my surprise, on a business trip to Miami in the 1980s, at finding an abandoned bus in a yard and discovering it was an ex-Gelligaer lowbridge Leyland PD2. On another trip, I was pleasantly surprised to find a Bristol FLF in the parking lot of my Dallas airport hotel — Thomas Cook certainly hadn't mentioned that attraction when booking the hotel.

In both cases, I found the buses by pure chance and therein lies the problem. Once exported, it is difficult to keep track of buses sold to foreign buyers. Can the internet help? Certainly, the world-wide nature of the web makes it possible to look up information about any country in the world before you leave the UK. Some buses — often those used as static exhibitions, shops or restaurants — have dedicated websites and others are run by operators with websites to publicise their operations. For instance, if you're planning a visit to New York, try looking at www.nycdouble-decker.com, www.graylinenewyork.com and www.nyappletours.com before you go.

Bravely, New York Double Deck Tours has eschewed a red livery for this dignified dark blue scheme, seen on an unidentified Bristol FLF in New York in April 1999. THOMAS BRYCELAND

Enthusiast sites

In other cases, there are enthusiast sites dedicated to former UK buses. One of the more important ones is Roger Hardy's *British Buses in North America*, which has just joined forces with Paul Bateson's previously paper-based *British Buses Abroad* newsletter. The site already offered photos and information about some former UK vehicles in North America and the coverage is being expanded progressively. There's also a useful links page, listing over 30 other sites with a British bus flavour.

The easiest way to find *British Buses in North America* and other interesting sites is via the *Brits Abroad* section of The Bus Station (www.annells.demon.co.uk/busstn.htm). You can also use The Bus Station to see listings country by country of all known bus interest sites. For instance, did you know that you can still buy buses proudly displaying the British Leyland emblem, including Titans (of the front engined variety) and Panthers ('low-floor city bus')? If your answer is 'no', then I recommend a visit to www.ashokleyland.com to see what you are missing.

For a serious study, www.busesworldwide.org includes information about that society and a small picture gallery as well as links to bus manufacturers around the globe. I particularly liked the shot of an Atlantean in Jakarta, Indonesia 'converted' to low-floor specification — as the caption says, simply load the bus so full that the front platform scrapes along the road.

Finally, remember that you cannot always believe what you may read. Visit www.coffeebus.com and you will not only see the choice of coffees available in Tucson, Arizona from the Bristol Double Decker Coffee Bus, but also a potted and most certainly original and unauthorised history of the Bristol K-type.

So whether you are planning to visit Malta, Madeira or Montreal, check out the Net before you go. It could help you find some interesting British buses you might not otherwise have known about.

Update

FirstGroup's internet presence is spreading rapidly, with Yorkshire operations now covered by new sites for Bradford, Calderline, Huddersfield, Leeds, York and Mainline; they can be found at www.first{company name}.co.uk.

Other new major operator sites include www.solentblueline.com and www.eyms.co.uk (East Yorkshire), while two sites reviewed last December have been updated and are worth another look at www.wycombebus.co.uk and www.oxfordbus.co.uk. Meanwhile, to see what a smaller operator can achieve, try Cornish independent www.westerngreyhound.co.uk.

A further dealer in secondhand buses with a web presence can be found at www.fleetmaster.co.uk, while those with a Welsh interest should try www.buses.net. For an excellent example of what a small voluntary group can achieve, visit the Yorkshire Dales Public Transport Users Group journey planner at website.lineone.net/~travelinfo/dales/index.html. A full review of this site and some other journey planners — including the new Scottish Citylink site at www.citylink.co.uk — will appear next month.

Thanks this month to Steve Annells, Paul Bateson, Ray Wilkes, Paul Harvey and Tommy Bryceland for their help. All the addresses quoted should be prefixed with <http://>

Your comments on 'Buses On The Net' are always welcome. Contact me on buses@signal-training.com.



THE 32 DAY

Unless you visited York between 6 September and 7 October last year, you would have missed Yorkbus. DAVID LONGBOTTOM pays tribute to this short-lived venture and explains its unusual background

In the summer of 1992, Lothian Region Transport — owned on behalf of the poll tax-payers of Edinburgh and the three former counties of the Lothians — started operating blue and white Leyland Atlantean tour buses in York, nearly 200 miles to the south and most definitely in another UK country.

The reason could be expressed in two words: Guide Friday. The green tour bus operator had begun running in Edinburgh in 1989 as it started to spread across Britain from its Stratford upon Avon base and Lothian wasn't best pleased. It regarded the Edinburgh city tour market as its own and had apparently turned down Guide Friday's approaches to work in partnership, with Lothian maintaining the buses and Guide Friday developing the tours. Rather than just compete on its home patch, it established Classic Tour-branded open-top bus services in three English cities which already had Guide Friday tours.

The York Classic Tour, run from a base at the Raylor Centre industrial estate in James Street, differed from its counterparts started in Oxford in 1990 and Cambridge in 1997; they were run in conjunction with local coach operators — as the Oxford tour still is — but Lothian held its own operator's licence in York.

By 1994, it was looking for ways to make the depot expand and that summer added two coaches, kept in the traditional black and white coach livery and marketed as York Classic Coaches. School contracts were secured from September 1994 and, as further contracts were added in subsequent years, madder and white covered-top Atlanteans were moved south from Edinburgh and emblazoned with 'LRT York' fleetnames in place of 'LRT Lothian' used on their home patch.

The coaches remained in Yorkshire for around three years and operations continued uneventfully with a fleet of 12 Atlanteans — six open-top and six covered-top school buses — until the tours ceased on 28 May last year.



The beginning of great changes

This was the beginning of big changes at Lothian, following former Stagecoach Scotland supremo Neil Renilson's appointment as chief executive. The cold war with Guide Friday was coming to an end and in a series of events that also ended the Cambridge tour and Guide Friday's Edinburgh Airport service, York Classic Tour was no more and several open-top Atlanteans (not just the ones that ran in York) were sold to Guide Friday.

That left the six school buses running mainly in the Fulford area but also to Joseph Rowntree School; their drivers were served with redundancy notices but creditably remained to continue these contracts until they expired on 31 July. Although that was the end of LRT York, the operator's licence wasn't surrendered until December.

Enter Yorkbus. Lothian's former commercial director, Ron House, was keen to continue the school contracts and acquired a fleet of nine Atlanteans from his former employer — the six already in York and three that had not previously ventured south of the border. He also took over the lease on the Raylor Centre premises and selected Yorkbus as the name for this new venture.



The buses were repainted, some in York and some in Edinburgh, into a navy and white livery (navy where madder had been before) with Yorkbus fleetnames and a stylised York Minster logo.

The depot was secured, the buses were acquired and repainted and drivers — many of whom had worked for LRT York — were recruited. Everything was in place.

But the contracts were not. News came through that Yorkbus had failed to secure any of Lothian's school contracts or, indeed, any school work at all. With so much invested in the seemingly stillborn operation, the fateful decision was taken to begin commercial bus services on 6 September, serving various parts of the city — the most intensive being a 15-minute schedule on the city centre-Acomb corridor — from 07.30 to 18.30 on Mondays to Saturdays.

WONDER

subject to conditions of sale.
Yorkbus
subject to conditions of sale.



Left:

One of the two coaches that started Lothian's school contract fleet in York, Duple Dominant-bodied Leyland Leopard 53 (USX 53V). The LRT York fleetname was also applied to red double-deckers.

DAVID LONGBOTTOM

From Monday 6th September 1999

Yorkbus
Your money goes further with us

56 Piccadilly – Stockton Lane
via Tang Hall & Ashley Park

57 Chapel Fields – Piccadilly
via Acomb Front Street

58 Chapel Fields – Tang Hall
via Cornlands Road

59 Foxwood Lane – Tang Hall
via Cornlands Road

59A Foxwood Lane – Stockton Lane
via Tang Hall & Ashley Park

Please note that these timetables are subject to
alteration or cancellation on public holidays.
No service 25, 26 December or 1 January.

☎ (01904) 430989

So an interesting, if exceptionally short, chapter of York's transport history was brought to an end — following on from the highly unusual situation where, for seven years, sightseeing

tours of the capital of Yorkshire and school bus services for North Yorkshire were operated by a Scottish local authority-owned bus company.

Many thanks to the drivers of Yorkbus — in particular Ian Hartas — who were so helpful and informative during the company's brief existence.

Yorkbus looked the part. The buses were always presented immaculately with full destination displays including side and rear numbers, and became a familiar and distinctive sight around the historic city.

Fares were pitched below those of First York with opening offers that included a 40p flat fare for pensioners and children, one child carried free with every paying adult and a 90p maximum fare. The company's slogan was 'Your money goes further with Yorkbus'.

Too good to miss

The biggest bargain of all was the £1.50 day saver, allowing unlimited travel on all five routes. This, I decided, was too good an offer to miss, so on Friday 1 October, armed with my Yorkbus timetable leaflet, I arrived in the city to sample the operation at first hand.

As I waited at the Stonebow stop in the city centre, the first bus to arrive was GSC 622X on route 59 bound for Foxwood Lane. As passengers from Tang Hall alighted, they shared good humoured banter with the driver, and this excellent customer service seemed to continue all day with passengers being greeted and thanked as they boarded and left.

Drivers also seemed to make every effort to pick up intending passengers; those not quite at stops were waited for and those looking unsure at stops were informed of the route. They did pick up new passengers as a result. Apparently, this friendliness could be put down to the fact that most of the drivers had driven the sightseeing buses and were used to being on the look-out for potential customers and caring for them once aboard.

My observations suggested that, although it was in competition with First York, this newcomer was building a niche for itself and may have been doing reasonably well. I don't remember seeing any full buses, but I didn't see any empty ones either.

So it came as a surprise when all operations stopped, without notice, after Thursday 7 October — after just 32 days of service. Service registrations were cancelled from 10 or 12 November, but the 42-day notice period was not observed. The buses were moved to an auctioneer's premises in Ossett, West Yorkshire, 'To Let' signs adorned the Raylor Centre premises and an official winding-up meeting of Yorkbus Ltd was held at the York Holiday Inn on 11 November.

Opposite above:

GSC 621X, one of the Atlanteans already based in York, at the city rail station. The livery was applied in Lothian style, right down to the gold lining beneath the lower deck windows
DAVID LONGBOTTOM

Opposite below:

Another consequence of Lothian's withdrawal from York was the sale of several open-top Atlanteans to Guide Friday. Former 45 (BFS 45L) of 1972 has plenty of vacant seats on top on a wet day in Stirling last September.
MURDOCH CURRIE

THE BUSES

Yorkbus operated nine Leyland Atlanteans with Alexander AL H45/30D bodies. 1979 AN68A/1R 620 (OSC 620V) and 1981 AN68C/1Rs 621-5 (GSC 621-5X) came from LRT York, while AN68C/1Rs 654-6 (GSC 654-6X) came from Edinburgh. 620 was painted in livery, but was only used for spares.

THE ROUTES

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 56 | Tang Hall-Ashley Park-Heworth-city centre (Piccadilly)
Peak hours only |
| 57 | Chapel Fields-Acomb-Piccadilly
Half-hourly |
| 58 | Chapel Fields-Acomb-city centre-Tang Hall
Peak hours only |
| 59 | Foxwood lane-Acomb-city centre-Tang Hall
Half-hourly |
| 59A | Foxwood Lane-Acomb-city centre-Heworth
One journey daily |

PICTURE

YORK BY NIGHT AND DAY

Yorkbus may have gone but York remains interesting
DAVE McALONE captures the buses of one of England's historic cities at work amongst their impressive architectural surroundings



Above:
First York is preparing to bid to renew its Park-&-Ride contracts in York, worked currently by specially-liveried Scania L113CRLs with Wright Access-ultralow bodies. This one waits in traffic within sight of York Minster.

Below:
Barbie by floodlight: First York 3365 (T365 NUA), one of last year's delivery of Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs prepares to leave Station Road monument for Haxby on 29 December.



VIEW



Left: Although the recent acquisition of York Pullman services has increased First York's dominance of the city and its immediate surroundings, Reliance of Sutton-on-Forest helps maintain an independent presence with its service from Easingwold. This Volvo B10BLE with Alexander ALX300 body is Reliance's first low-floor bus.



Above: Showing off the company's recently introduced, simplified two-tone green livery is First York 1255 (G255 JYG), a 1989 DAF SB220 with Optare Delta body.



Right: First York 6463 (SND 471X), a former First Manchester Leyland Atlantean AN68B/1R with Northern Counties body, is glimpsed from the portals of the Theatre Royal arches on 3 February.

STAY OF EXECUTION AT PORTSMOUTH

Further to our report last month concerning the plight of the City of Portsmouth Preserved Transport Depot, we are pleased to report that, despite a definite statement to the contrary, Portsmouth City Council is now considering a one-year extension to the lease on its Broad Street premises. Council leader Leo Madden has also stated that he will do everything in his power to help CPPTD find suitable alternative premises, and so prevent the collection from being broken up. *Preserved Bus*, now published on the first Friday of every month, will doubtless have more information in its next issue, on sale 7 April.

Meanwhile in connection with one of its regular open days, CPPTD has organised a mouth-watering gathering of vehicles from the former Southdown fleet, which will be on display in the car park on The Camber in Old Portsmouth on **28 May**. Further details from event organiser Bruce Oliver on 023 9281 1360.

Wrong price!

Apologies to the organisers of Classic Automotion; we somehow managed to quote their 1998 prices in our rally calendar (last month). The correct admission charges for the event are £5 adults, £2.50 for children 13 or under and £11 for a family ticket (two adults, two children).

2000 RALLY CALENDAR

Gremlins got the better of three entries in the 2000 Rally Calendar published in last month's *Buses*.

Sorry, but we omitted the First Western National bus and vehicle rally at Plymouth Hoe on **23 July**.

We have also been asked to make clear that Southport-Blackpool Commercial Vehicle Road Safety Run on **20 August** starts in Southport and finishes in Blackpool, and please note that the Bedford Gathering at Somersham, Cambs is on **27 August**, not 28 August.

Readers disappointed by the decision not to hold the *Leicester Mercury* Transport Pageant this year may like to know that an alternative event is being held not too far away on **21/22 May**. This is the Tallington Steam & Country Festival near Stamford, Lincs. Bus owners interested in attending should contact Rock House, Scotgate, Stamford, Lincs, PE9 2YQ or phone 01780 763063.

OLYMPIAN RETURNS TO UK

While Stagecoach has been shipping mid-life Dennis Darts back to its English fleets from Citybus in Hong Kong, its 1983 prototype air conditioned three-axle Leyland Olympian 12metre coach has come back into preservation.

Dave Rogers, from Swindon, has purchased 102 (DE 4281) — a training bus since 1994 — and intends to restore it to original condition which ought to include a

pirated National Express fleet-name. It first entered service with Citybus in 1985 on an express service from Hong Kong to Shenzhen on the Chinese mainland.

Dave Rogers and his newly repatriated Citybus Olympian at Stagecoach's Swindon depot.
DIANE STOYLES



Arriva Southend open-top departure

Buses columnist John Lidstone has been busy finding Arriva Southend's 51-year-old open-top AEC Regent III 1174 (KTF 594) a caring new home.

Popular 'special-events bus' 594 — as it always was with Southend Transport — was the last half-cab remaining with a major fleet in Southend. With all other buses run out of London Road the day before, 594, still carrying Southend Transport blue, white and red livery and with John at the wheel, became, on 28 January, the last bus to leave Southend Transport's garage, dating back to the early 1960s. Demolition was due to begin the following Monday.

Buyer Steve Morris of Rexquote is to return 594 to passenger-carrying service, but only for private charter and occasional appearances on a summer seasonal heritage route for Taunton Deane District Council. And just for this year, Steve is keeping it in Southend colours. 594 made the long journey to Taunton 'without missing a beat', said Steve.

New to Morecambe & Heysham back in 1949, the Regent was subsequently converted to open-top for seafront service before coming to Southend in 1992, having spent some time at Coombe Martin in Devon.



Rexquote's Stephen Morris (left) receives KTF 594 from our very own John G. Lidstone (right).

NFBCP MEETING

The second Annual General Meeting of the National Federation for Bus & Coach Preservation will take place in the Conference Suite at Dudley College, West Midlands, on Sunday 26 March 2000 at 12.30 for 13.00. The meeting will be followed by a talk from Colin Curtis OBE, President of the Routemaster Operators & Owners Association.

WELSH WANDERINGS II

This year's Welsh Wanderings tour is scheduled for Saturday 13 May, leaving Merthyr Tydfil at 07.30 aboard Robert Price's 1971 Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard coach, with pick-up stops along the way towards Swansea. Visits include D Coaches of Morriston, East End Garage, Clydach, well known for its Seddon RUs, and Jones International, Llandelio where 1964 Harrington-bodied Leyland Tiger Cub BCJ 710B will take over. Visits will also include Midway Motors, Crymch and Silcox, Pembroke Dock.

Further details from Andrew Tucker, 28 Spinney Halt, Whetstone, Leicester LE8 6HU, tel: 0116 2751642

SERVICE *Extra*

Two years ago, shortly after I said Transperth could do with some low-floor buses, the Australian city ordered 800. Well, weeks after my commenting that economy class seating on planes was too cramped, a large international airline based in Hillingdon announced a new full-fare economy product with more legroom.

Incidentally, if my February column confused you, I should re-emphasise that I think many buses offer more comfort, especially space, than many other modes of transport. As a concrete example, I cite the front offside seat upstairs on the Stagecoach Viscount Northern Counties-bodied Olympian on which I travelled recently from Northampton to Corby.

London United, again

I'm grateful to Peter Blake ('You Write' February) for highlighting that although bus companies are good at customer service, they're not consistent. I've been an almost daily user of London United since its creation, and have commented regularly about its Metrobuses. In general, I've been happier with Arriva Surrey & West Sussex and its vehicles, but I know other people take a different view — Peter Blake and the former editor of this magazine to name but two. However, my January column was aimed solely at London United's vehicles, not its staff.

And now a complaint about London United. Only kidding. This is about what, until AirLinks took over, was a London United service, but I think the offender is London Transport. My point highlights the difficulties of providing succinct public transport information.

You arrive at Bus Stop A just into the Bayswater Road by Marble Arch with two suitcases, intent upon catching the Airbus to Heathrow. The 'Where to Board Your Bus at Marble Arch' map tells you to go to Bus Stop P in Oxford Street, so you lug your suitcases through the pedestrian subways or run the gauntlet of the several lanes of fast traffic. You get on the Airbus, settle down and find yourself passing Bus Stop A and then — what's this? — your bus is hailed at the next stop which is much nearer Stop A than P and is along a level pavement with no intervening roads — and is a designated Airbus stop. But it's not, in LT terms, at Marble Arch.

You curse whoever devised the map you studied. So there we are: good idea (comprehensive information), bad result (seriously inconvenient suggestion to one possible group of users).

Snatched from the jaws

Here are two other recent examples of buses snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

I've commented before on the tendency for drivers to decide the bus is full as soon as three people stand near the platform, which annoys people left behind when they see that the bus is well below its standing capacity and often has spare seats. So I was pleased the other morning when our driver continued to uplift passengers, asking standees to 'move down the bus' in time-honoured fashion until the bus behind on the close-headway service caught up.

Our man then decided he was full and would only set down passengers. Fair enough. He had a double-figure standing load and was running late. But at the two stops where he had to set down passengers, it would have been easy to say 'There's another, almost empty bus

JULIAN OSBORNE encounters good and bad explanations and an infuriating local map as he experiences life at the sharp end of British bus operation

one stop behind', but he just announced that he was full. It's hardly surprising that these would-be passengers looked on sceptically as the bus disgorged passengers.

Not long afterwards, I realised that buses on another service were by-passing a section paralleled by other routes. A helpful and considerate regulator explained that they were doing this to avoid roadworks and were protecting the overall schedule and the passengers at the other end of the route where no parallel services exist.

Unfortunately, his drivers' method of telling people ('Not going there. Plenty of other buses') didn't put the most useful spin on the company's intentions, especially as there is a history of buses skipping that bit of the route, allegedly at the drivers' whim.

One driver suggested it was counter-productive to explain too much in case awkward individuals prolong the discussions. In my time as a conductor, I think only one person out of the thousands I carried fell into this category. But it's unfair to blame the bus industry alone, for too many people at all levels of British society, against any real evidence, believe other people cannot be trusted to behave if given more than the minimum information. I just don't believe it.

And so to the Midlands

In future issues, I'll be regaling you with my — so far overwhelmingly good — impressions of recent bus travel in the Midlands. But a few openers. One damp Friday, I found myself in the home of Service Extras, our second city, and spotted the chance for us all here at *Buses* to look co-ordinated by linking to Phil Tonks's interesting piece of last month and the ex-editor's piece in this issue.

But given my precise location and to avoid unwitting duplication, I decided to take a ride on a 20-year-old Metrobus. Waving away various more modern devices of Travel West Midlands, I didn't have to wait too long for one to turn up. I was impressed: a well-presented interior (if rather garish décor) with, I noted, possible dirt-traps — like the rear of bench seats — deliberately minimised and no unusual mechanical noises from the rear wheels or anywhere else. And the driver, on a busy bus in busy traffic, was noticeably helpful and civil to passengers.

My other opener is to observe that while all the drivers I have travelled with recently have been good, the drivers of the two First PMT buses I used were outstandingly friendly and helpful towards passengers. I don't know whether this is typical but I have written to the company to express my appreciation — and have received a prompt letter of thanks.



In future issues, Julian Osborne will recount his experiences in the Midlands, but he's already been impressed by the quality of drivers he encountered with First PMT. 828 (T828 SFS) is one of last year's delivery of Scania L94UB/Wright Axxess Flioline 12m buses. CLIFF BEETON

To BUSES,
PO BOX 3759
Glasgow G41 5YN
or Fax 0141 427 9594

Wrong post office

Sir,
I thoroughly enjoyed reading the excellent article about low-floor buses and operations in the Shetlands (*Buses* January) because I had a memorable and delightful holiday in the islands last summer when the Cutty Sark Tall Ships Race was in Lerwick.

However, I am sorry to say that the article contains two mistakes. It says Britain's most northerly post office is at Uyeasound, when that claim to fame belongs to Haroldswick on the Isle of Unst, nine miles north Uyeasound. And that is where your photograph on page 24 was taken.

D. Anderson,
Jarrow

Since the article was written, the Haroldswick post office has closed, so perhaps we were accidentally ahead of the game in awarding this distant accolade to Uyeasound. — Ed.

Nightmare vision of Manchester in 2010

Sir,
Brian Souter is correct when he says that the bus industry needs to concentrate on retaining its customer base (*Summit or Nothing*, 'News', January). Unfortunately, his Manchester subsidiary, for one, is having mixed results in this respect.

While reliability (at least where it is within its own control) is pretty good, we are seeing an acceleration in off-peak service cuts. Evening services in particular, with their high level of missile attacks, are obvious targets when the industry cannot attract staff. However, the level of bank holiday provision is of grave concern, with housing estates like mine, with lower-than-average car ownership, having to make do with less than 20% of the normal Sunday departures, running over a mere nine-hour period at New Year.

Stagecoach is no different to its local competitors, and anecdotal evidence suggests Greater Manchester's bank holiday provision is probably the worst in urban Britain.

The government has made it quite clear that increased (or retained) off-peak bus service levels are not part of the Transport Bill, and with Lord Macdonald declaring a truce in the phoney war against motorists, the future looks bleak. The government has said that it actually wants to encourage increased car ownership, thus further decimating the bus industry's base market.

Apparently, the Department of the Environment, Transport & the Regions has a 10-year vision — well, so do I. This latest development, combined with current legislation and continued transport budget cuts for local authorities, will lead us to a US-style bus service by 2010. Only major corridors will be served, and only for 11 hours a day, six days a week.

This will result in gridlock and social exclusion problems far beyond any government forecast, especially in northern conurbations.

Phil Longdon,
Denton, Manchester

Cut the catenary

Sir,
It was a pleasant surprise to see trolleybuses featured (*'Global News' March*). This is a sadly neglected form of transport in the UK. Thank goodness for the more enlightened attitude on the Continent and other places.

However, I take issue with your use of the word 'catenary' in describing the overhead wiring. In trolleybus parlance, the overhead is simply referred to either as 'wiring' or 'overhead'. Frogs and crossings are referred to as 'special work'. Please use the correct terminology.

Gerry Cork,
Tarring,
West Sussex

CCS makes its case

Sir,
I read with interest the snippet about unhealthy baggage (*'Millar's Tales'*, January *Buses*). We have a policy that people shouldn't put luggage on seats, so our driver did the right thing. While he may not necessarily have expressed himself as politely or articulately as Mr Millar would have liked, the gist of what he said was actually true and, as somebody working in the industry, I am a little disappointed that Mr Millar, of all people, is not able to see why.

First, few people hold their luggage off the ground while they wait for their coach and even the newest pavements get dirty quickly. I suggest Mr M looks around his feet next time he is waiting at Luton Airport with his Franco-Italian luggage sitting on the ground beside him. Then he should ask himself if he'd like to sit on a seat which had been covered in grime from said pavement, via the bottom of his bag (if it's the leather one, I know just how much grime there will be). Would he have complained if the driver had asked him not to put his feet on the seat? Would he be prepared to sit his bag on his favourite comfy chair or sofa at home? It may be that he would, if he is very particular about where and when he puts his luggage down on his travels. However, we don't know where it's been and not all our passengers would be that fastidious.

Second, while the above should, perhaps, be described as a dry cleaning hazard rather than a health hazard, it is a safety hazard to bring bags on to a coach if they are too large for the luggage shelf on the coach — never mind whether they fit in the standard airline locker. This is a coach, it's only a shelf and it's smaller.

Imagine what would happen if the coach had to make an emergency stop. Mr Millar's bag could fall off the seat (or the shelf) and cause injury to another passenger, injury for which we, not he, would be liable; that's not good for either party's health. Furthermore, if there was an accident, a larger item of luggage in the wrong place could block the emergency exit, impeding the escape of passengers from the coach.

Putting a bag on the seat may be a good way to stop anyone sitting next to him, but I'm afraid our policy is simple — no matter how full or empty the coach is, the seats are there for passengers.

While I am sorry to hear the service was delayed by rush hour traffic, I must point out that we do allow extra daytime running time, but there is a limit as to how complicated you can make a timetable and three different running times each day is probably going too far. In addition, while our service is one of the quickest between Luton and Heathrow, it is already timetabled as one of the slowest, so it's difficult to slow it down even more. It is for this reason that we warn passengers clearly, on our website and all our timetables, to leave at least an hour extra for their journey and also that we cannot be held responsible for delays caused by traffic.

Finally, whether or not an airport chooses to build a bus shelter is not a factor we are able to control, so perhaps Mr Millar should address his remarks about double pneumonia to London Luton.

Mary McGuire,
Marketing manager,
Cambridge Coach Services

A driver's view of exact fares

Sir,
David Wragg (*'You Write' December*) says Lothian is the worst offender of 'Exact Fare No Change Given', and complains about sitting in queues of buses outside peak periods. I feel I must say that, in the first instance, as a driver this takes the onus off me of having to make sure that the money is right at the end of my shift. And I for one would not like to carry money only to be a potential target for any would-be mugger.

And surely exact fare is quicker. Mr Wragg would notice that bus stops in Edinburgh all have information regarding each service on that route, and how much the fare is in relation to the distance they wish to travel.

He says sitting in queues outside the peak is unnecessary. I thought this was normal in the UK, even in London. He should try sitting in a queue in Princes St behind a FirstGroup C5, C55, 66 or 86 and then say to himself surely that exact fare is quicker. He would also note the Greenway corridors make it quicker by bus with the exception of the Edinburgh-Barnton route and others in which one has to sit in a queue with other vehicles. And if Mr Wragg is a regular reader, he would also note that Lothian managing director Neil Renilson is right in what he says regarding boarding times; there are differences.

Mr Wragg doesn't say if he drives a car, or commutes by train or bus (FirstGroup) from South Queensferry to Edinburgh. One wonders.

Name and address supplied

Why exact fare systems are customer friendly

Sir,
Many cities introduced exact fare systems in the 1970s to maintain boarding times when routes were converted from crew to one-person operation. Certain operators also highlighted a need to reduce assaults on drivers by eliminating cash handling.

While some have since abandoned exact fare systems, many have stayed loyal. After an initial period, regular users of farebox buses adapt well and seem to appreciate the benefits. If there had been a significant loss of passengers on exact fare routes (which could have easily been identified by analysing revenue or loadings on parallel services with change giving) surely they would have been abandoned long ago.

In the West Midlands and Lothian where the prime operators are enthusiastic farebox users, levels of passenger decline have been consistently and significantly lower than the national average over many years. Obviously, other factors come into play but there appears to be evidence that exact fares may have helped maintain bus use in these areas.

I would suggest that this is because most passengers value a fast journey with the minimum time spent at stops above the inconvenience of tendering the correct fare. Others over-pay and, as with change-giving systems, some under-pay or over-ride. During two years of living in Birmingham, I never saw a passenger turned off a bus for not having the correct fare; the local custom was always to obtain change from fellow passengers.

Good marketing with extensive publicity to assist new customers is of course essential, but unfortunately this is the area in which most farebox operators fail miserably. Nevertheless, even in tourist cities like Edinburgh, passengers soon adapt, perhaps because many are from North America where exact fare systems are almost universal.

Some years ago, when London route W7 (Finsbury Park-Muswell Hill) was converted from farebox to conventional opo, there were calls from passengers for fareboxes to be re-introduced because the buses had become too slow. Admittedly, this was before the introduction of Travelcards, but it adds weight to the view that speed is a vital consideration when choosing to make a journey by bus. Passengers accept that buses are delayed by traffic congestion caused by other road users, but are far less sympathetic towards delays which (in their perception) have been created by the bus operator.

A unique optional feature of the Autofare system is the positioning of a ticket-issuing machine behind the driver so that passengers move into the bus to collect their tickets, enabling following customers to pay the farebox without further delay. At busy stops, this facility alone saves valuable seconds, yet I have never seen it applied to a non-farebox system. Can anyone explain why this idea has never caught on?

In our increasingly congested cities, exact fares are probably the most effective way of keeping buses moving rather than sitting at bus stops. Is it fair to expect local authorities to invest in bus priority measures while slow-boarding buses continue to create traffic queues? If crew operation cannot be justified on economic grounds, faster opo buses are essential and farebox operation is the most reliable way of achieving this. Apart from enthusiasts, very few travel by bus for pleasure. Most simply want to be taken as swiftly as possible to their destination.

Future smartcard technology will facilitate a new generation of stored value ticketing systems which may drastically reduce the proportion of cash-paying passengers. If that happens, fareboxes could become redundant, but we are not there yet.

**Andrew Boag,
London, N1**

Wragg's right of reply

Sir,
Further to your footnote ('You Write', January) that Lothian Region Transport managing director Neil Renilson claims a three-second boarding time with its no change fares system, as against a 20-second boarding time for FirstGroup, this seems to be a theoretical time for regular passengers with the exact fare.

In my experience, LRT buses are perfectly capable of causing queues by themselves without any assistance from a FirstGroup vehicle. In Edinburgh, in St Andrew Square and on North Bridge, I have seen three or four LRT buses in a queue, each only drawing forward to the bus stop after the one in front has moved off.

Apart from the waste of the passenger's time and the unproductive driving time as vehicles wait, in St Andrew Square these buses have made it difficult for other vehicles to enter the square from George Street, adding to peak period congestion.

The three-second boarding time seems rather like aircraft manufacturers who claim that their products meet the required 90-second emergency evacuation time; they use fit employees and Boy Scouts for the exercise rather than a typical planeload. It also overlooks the important point that Edinburgh and its surrounding towns and villages are important and attractive tourist destinations. Visitors cannot be expected to be instant experts on the local transport system, let alone its fare structure.

**David Wragg,
South Queensferry**

Exact fares should be made illegal

Sir,
Your correspondent David Wragg ('You Write' January) does well to spotlight Lothian's exact fares policy as being hardly likely to encourage bus travel in a tourist centre. It certainly does not encourage a car owner to change his ways. In fact, if John Prescott's words of support for public transport mean anything, surely the practice of demanding exact fares should be made illegal.

Just imagine going into Marks & Spencer or your local corner shop and being told you could not have any change. There would be an outcry and quite right, too. John Prescott's Transport Bill is giving powers to local authorities to introduce road charges and a levy on workplace parking, but will it provide the public with bags full of change so that they can board buses without being punished? Is Lothian so inefficient that it cannot treat its customers in a civilised manner?

The last time I was in Edinburgh, my family and I decided to visit a place which would mean a ride into the city centre, then changing on to another bus. I ascertained the adult and child fares to the centre, but did not know the fares for the second bus. For two adults and two children, the amount of coins needed to give exact fares for four people covering four journeys can be imagined, especially when some of the fares were unknown. The result, naturally, was that we went by car although it was less convenient.

I remember being at Gatwick Airport once when London Country South West, as it was then, required exact fares. The trip to Crawley was 37p which required at least four different coins, even if you had the required ones, so I went by train.

What Lothian needs is some real competition on its best services by an operator prepared to give the customers the service they want. No wonder FirstGroup buses delay Lothian buses on the few services where they compete. The First buses are giving change to those who cannot board a Lothian bus without paying a penalty.

By all means encourage pre-payment or multi-ride tickets to save change-giving, but not a complete ban. Or is it done deliberately to collect excess income above the correct fare?

**Tony Fawthrop,
Stockport**

Fares information and dual-doors make all the difference

Sir,
My wife and I are frequent visitors to Edinburgh and find that the exact fare policy works for us. Until fairly recently, strangers to the city and to Lothian were in a difficult position trying to find out which exact fare would be required, but the introduction of route/fare displays at bus stops has largely eliminated the difficulty.

I note that Neil Renilson quotes the shorter boarding time per passenger for Lothian versus First Edinburgh. My observations would be in general agreement with his statistic, but I might add that the separate exit and entrance also contribute to shorter standing times at stops. Some time ago, I incurred the wrath of Tom Knowles by stating the same facts; he felt that dual door buses present a significant risk of injury to passengers, but I have to say that on my extensive travels in Edinburgh and in many Continental countries where multi-door operation is the norm, I have never seen any evidence to support Mr Knowles's fears.

If I have any concern about British methods of fare collection, it is that we seem to persist with a system (the tapering fares scale) which does not adequately address the current situation in bus operation where single manning is the order of the day.

Germany, Austria and Switzerland make extensive use of zonal flat fares and allow for pre-purchase of tickets. Indeed in the major cities of Switzerland that is the only way to pay — drivers are there to drive. I hope that we are not suffering in this respect from the notorious British disease incontinentalitis.

**Neil MacDonald
Walton on the Hill
Stafford**

This is a letters page and the views expressed therein are purely the views of the writers; they do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or publisher of BUSES.

Spurred on by last month's letters page and the various comments in *January Buses*, the arguments rage on between those who believe the London Routemaster's reign should end and those who want them to stay. As this month's 'Fleet News' and 'In London' pages show, they're disappearing from Reading and London Transport Buses is signalling that they may disappear from the capital before 2007. Here's a selection from the latest postbag . . .

Where's the appropriate replacement?

Sir,

Agreed, dear old Routemasters are well past their prime. Perhaps many are still in weekday service because so far there has been no appropriate replacement. For many passengers, Routemasters present a more amenable prospect than any driver-only double-decker.

On boarding, passengers will either see a friendly or neutral conductor on the platform, or none if he/she is elsewhere on the bus. Getting on a one-person-operated bus, the passenger is confronted by a semi-transparent screen beyond which sits the driver who, in limited recent London experience, is occasionally anything but courteous, even approachable — though, often, who could blame him/her?

Enough has been said for me not to rehearse the merits of the Routemaster design, like ease of maintenance and designed overhaul system. Decades ago, politicians determined there would be no further front-engined rear-entrance bus for London. Retention of the time-worn Routemaster in central London's front-line service — 601 of them currently owned and almost all available for service [*London Omnibus Traction Society, January 2000*] — could be cited as proof of the need for the traditional design.

Yes, I agree it ought not to be beyond the experts to design the Routemaster's successor. Delete your 'exciting' ('Editorial' January) — to the passenger, buses aren't exciting, they're merely usable and to the non-user they're a nuisance. Otherwise, your conclusion is eminently supportable. Politicians and manufacturing industry, please agree: find the means and the money and start now on Routemaster's successor.

John A. Gray,
Cambridge

Like chopping up Horatio's flagship

Sir,

I disagree with those readers who say London should get rid of its Routemasters. I believe that scrapping these old maidens of the road would be like chopping up Nelson's flagship *Victory* for firewood, or turning St Paul's Cathedral into a bowling alley.

I feel these old red buses are a very important part of England's heritage and we should keep every last one where it belongs in London. I strongly believe that in the many years these old buses have been trundling along London's streets, that they have absorbed the very flavour of London rather like a giant red sponge. So whenever you catch a Routemaster, if it's in Scotland or Reading, it feels like you're in London. Seeing rows of these old buses is part of a day out in London.

Millions of pounds of lottery money is thrown into the arts. They should invest money in totally refurbishing all the Routemasters and purchase back all those that are surplus elsewhere in the country and restore them to London's streets. They should create park-&-ride schemes where, for a small fee, you could leave your car in a guarded car park and use a refurbished Routemaster to get in and out of Greater London. That would make them earn their keep.

Lastly, those old buses serve as a worldwide advertisement for British workmanship. They are 100% British and they're still going strong. That should make every Englishman feel proud. Pick the bones out of that, all you Brussels fans and long live all Routemasters.

Stephen Roy England,
Barnstaple, North Devon

We'd be stuck without them

Sir,

Sentiment is not what has kept the Routemaster in use on some of London's busiest routes, but practicality. It was the last type of bus designed by London Transport and that's why it remains suitable in so many ways. The fact that the design is continuing to give exceptional service in what is probably the heaviest traffic in the country — and is outliving so many more modern vehicles — speaks for itself.

I cannot believe for one minute that you really feel the dated appearance of the Routemaster would prevent anybody using buses more. It is the speed of entry and exit offered by its crew operation that so many people prefer. When did you last get a bus in Oxford Street? As for being a car driver behind one, this happens with even the newest buses: driver-only buses did wonders for traffic congestion in London.

I remember being told, when training in the early 1970s at Chiswick, that the reason LT no longer designed and built its own buses was because the government would only give it a subsidy towards the cost of new buses if they were bought off the peg from outside bus builders. As a result, no more buses were built specifically to meet the uniquely heavy demands of London.

In the 1970s, an LT-designed replacement for the Routemaster was on the drawing board. The LT boffins had come up with something new, but the ruling over the subsidy put an end to it. Judging by the DMS etc, they were obviously a lot better at designing buses than the outside manufacturers from whom it was forced to buy.

It is for the very reasons you give that the government should have allowed the well-proven LT design arrangement to continue. Admittedly, the Routemaster would have given way to its successors years ago, but London would now have buses that met the requirements of all groups.

As a Londoner, I can tell you that the Routemaster is not just a bit of lingering history. We'd be stuck without it.

It's a tragedy that the places where buses of such quality were designed and built have all gone. The Routemaster is a reminder of what was good and has been lost. Don't knock it. Sentiment it isn't.

Ian Gaffney,
Blackheath,
London, SE3

Antique and obsolete

Sir,

I agree entirely with Michael Dryhurst ('You Write' March). He makes an excellent case.

The open platform bus is an antique and obsolete concept. It finally disappeared from Paris over 30 years ago. Those still in London service should go the same way sooner rather than later. Moreover, the Routemaster is World War 2 technology, as far removed from today's as can be imagined. Low-floor double-deckers are available now, for crew as well as one-person operation. All LT Buses has to do is stipulate their use in route tenders. There's no excuse today for doing otherwise.

There is similarly no excuse for doing next to nothing to combat illegal parking. LT Buses, the Traffic Director for London and the Metropolitan Police must all get together and mount a concerted campaign to stamp it out. It is nothing but an anti-social activity all of us — bus passengers or not — could certainly do without.

Tim Hall,
Putney,
London, SW15

This is a letters page and the views expressed therein are purely the views of the writers; they do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or publisher of BUSES.

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BApril/g

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Ex-Stagecoach South Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F FDV 839V has been repainted in cream and white fleet colours, but with a blue skirt.

Alexcars, Cirencester

New Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano B44F T446 HRV has replaced Willowbrook Warrior-rebodied Leyland Leopard HIL 7772, withdrawn with serious accident damage and sold to Matthews, Fromes Hill. DAF 400 minibus G140 GOJ has been withdrawn and awaits sale.

Duple 425s E453 CGM and C152 PAB have been re-registered RIL 3701/2.

Alpha Travel, Honiton

Ex-Southern National Ford Transits C819/92 GYD are in use.

Ambermile Group, Honley

Before last year's sale to Arriva Yorkshire, Arriva The Shires provided Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3Rs A143/52 EPA with Plaxton C51F (143) and C57F (152) bodies and Volvo B10M-61/Duple C49Ft FIL 4919 (D614 FSL).

Angloblue, Leeds

Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R/Plaxton C53F MSL 194X (MAX 335X) and TRCTL11/3R/Plaxton C50F UNJ 367 (EEW 949Y) have been acquired

Applebys, Conisholme

More Leyland Nationals added to stock here are 11351/1R MIL 5582 (TOE 486N) from Arriva Manchester, 11351A/1R OOX 811R from Arriva North West and NOE 604R and XOY 754T from unidentified sources.

The ban on registering services in Scarborough this year ('News', January) means that the open-top seafront service will not operate this coming season.

Applegates, Berkeley, Glos

V2 EFA is a new Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Robin Hood C25F exhibited at Coach & Bus 99, while O.814 P73 VWO has been on loan.

Arriva Croydon & North

Surrey/Guildford & West Surrey AA

Dennis Dart 9.8SDL/East Lancs Spryte B40F DS22-24 (N542-4 TPK) are back from long-term loan to Arriva London South.

422/3/7/8 (L422 CPC etc), Mercedes-Benz 709D/Dormobile, have been transferred from West Sussex (422/8) and Guildford & West Surrey (423/7) to Arriva Cymru.

Leyland Olympian ONCL10/1R/Northern Counties H43/29F LR504 (G504 SFT) has gone to Midlands North.

Arriva Cymru AA

New are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B39F SDC573-91 (V573-91 DJC), with seven more delivered to Caego unregistered. SDC573-8 are at Llandudno Junction, SDC579-84 are at Rhyl and SDC585-91 are at Chester.

Acquisitions from other Arriva fleets continue with Mercedes-Benz 709D/Dormobile B25F MMM722/3/7 (L422 CPB etc) and B27F MMM728 (L428 CPC), MMM722/8 from West Sussex and MMM723/7 from Guildford & West Surrey, while Kent & East Sussex has provided 709D/Plaxton Beaver DP20F N352 BKK, noted un-numbered at Caego.

DAF coach CDD944 (M944 LYR) has acquired registration NEY 819 from withdrawn Leyland Tiger CTL819 which became D196 WJC.

The arrival of the new Darts at Chester released Leyland Olympians DOG229/32/57 to Aberystwyth, in turn reducing the once huge active Bristol/ECW fleet; by mid-January, Tony Moyes kindly tells me that the only six closed-top VRT/SL3s still operating were DVG516-8/22/4/7 (516/8 normally based at New Quay, 517/22 at Machynlleth and 524/7 at Aberystwyth). The most recent VR withdrawals have seen the end of DVG468, 500/30/2 (WTU 468W, YMB 500W, DCA 530/2X); DVG532 suffered engine failure and donated its back axle to DVG518. Previously withdrawn DVG533 (DCA 533X) is being cannibalised.

Other news of withdrawals is that Leyland National 2 SNL132 (B132 SED) has been taken out of service and previously withdrawn SNL131 (B131 SED) has been sold. The first acquired Leyland Olympian to go is ex-Yorkshire DOL401 (YWX 401X).

Optare MetroRiders MMC915/8/9/21-4/6-9 (J715/8/9/21/2 CUM, K723/4/6-9 HUG) are being transferred to other Arriva fleets; 928/9 have gone to Scotland West and 919 has left Cymru.

A vandal attack at Rhyl early in the new year left 10 vehicles with broken windows and other damage.

Arriva Fox County AA

It's reported that the minibus fleet is being renumbered with 1000-prefixed fleetnumbers replacing the M-prefixes and that all double-deckers are to be numbered in the 4000 series already used for newer vehicles, so only single-deckers are in the 2000 series.

2534 (PWE 534R), the last ex-South Yorkshire Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR/Alexander AL-type H45/29D, has been acquired for preservation by Paul Williams of Leicester; on paper, it had been renumbered 4303.

Arriva Kent & Sussex AA

Arriva Southern Counties has restructured its management, so Mid Kent & East Sussex comprises the headquarters depot at Maidstone, along with Hawkhurst, Tenterden, Tunbridge Wells and the New Enterprise operation.

1352 (N355 BKK), a Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver, has been transferred to Cymru.

Arriva Kent Thameside AA

Arriva Southern Counties North Kent comprises the headquarters depot at Gillingham, along with Sittingbourne, Sheerness, Northfleet and Dartford.

Arriva London AA

DLA146/51-8 (V346/51-8 DGT), DAF DB250RSLF/Alexander ALX400 H43/21D have been delivered. Recently delivered 10.8m Dennis Darts ADL2-23 have Alexander B33D bodies.

A requirement for additional AEC Routemasters for route 19 has had several interesting outcomes: CO36/26RD RM313 (WSJ 739, WLT 313) has been transferred from The Original London Sightseeing Tour and is expected to become H36/28R again with its roof fixed and its open platform restored; also, the ex-London Transport Hatfield-stored trio, RM295, 736 and 1330, will be fitted with Cummins engines and refurbished at Enfield. All four will be allocated to Clapton to enable Iveco-engined RM1125, 1725 and 2185 to be transferred to Brixton.

Norwood-based Leyland Olympian L223 is the second of this batch to be refurbished and fitted with a Voith gearbox. ex-Kentish Bus Olympian L703 was deroefed recently by the Selsdon Road low railway bridge at South Croydon.

Further to November 'Fleet News', MCW Metrobus M686 is registered KYV 686X.

Darts DS22-4 (N542-4 TPK) have been transferred to Arriva Southern Counties, Mercedes-Benz 811Ds MD430/1/4-6/8 (L430/1/4-6 CPJ, P438 HKN) to North West (both types recently acquired with Croydon area services), while Metrobus M200 (BYX 200V) has gone to Scotland West and M719 (KYV 719X) to Limebourne.

Arriva Midlands North AA

New deliveries comprise Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 206-8 (V201-8 KDA) and Volvo B6BLE/Wright Crusader 2 B40F (not DAF SB120) 2209-21/3-39 (V209 KDA etc); 2209-20 based at Tamworth, 2221/3-39 at Wellington.

Acquisitions from other Arriva fleets are Leyland Olympian ONCL10/1R/Northern Counties H43/29F 7 (G504 SFT) from Guilford & West Surrey, while Yorkshire has provided Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver B31F 473 (L773 RWW) and Leyland Lynxes 1019 (F301 AWW) and F284 AWW.

Newly-acquired Carlyle-bodied Dennis Dart 9.0SDLS G126/3/7 RGT, G218/7 LGK — still in storage — have been numbered 532-9.

Freight Rover Sherpas 218/9/22 (H708/9/29 LOL) have become ancillary vehicles at Cannock, Wellington and Oswestry respectively; 218 is numbered AV28.

Arriva North East AA

The last of the ex-London MCW Metrobuses to enter traffic is 607 (KYV 790X); similar GYE 402W is being broken up for spares.

As foreshadowed in February 'Fleet News', Bristol LH6L driver trainer 9993 (LPT 703T) and VRT/SL3 trainer 9995 (UGR 698R) have passed to the Bristol VR Enthusiasts' Society.

Former The Eden Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 2451/66 (D651 CVN, D466 EAJ) were sold to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer). 965 (G174 YRE), a Mercedes-Benz 811D/Carlyle is with Harvey, Port Glasgow.

Arriva Northumbria AA

Surprising additions reported in National Express colours are Van Hool Alizée C44Ft-bodied Scania 141/2 (V141/2 EJR).

Optare MetroRiders 895-900 (P895/6 XCU, P56-9 XTN) have joined similar 901 with Arriva Scotland West.

Body type

A	Articulated
B	Single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats/bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker (ie with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other types, with conventional gangways are H [Highbridge] regardless of overall height)
O	Open-top
CO	Convertible open-top

Seating capacity

(For double-deckers this is shown with the upper-deck capacity first, eg 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where these are not known a total figure is given).

Door position

F	Front
R	Rear
C	Centre
D	Dual doors

When platform doors are fitted where these would not normally figure, usually on rear entrance buses, this is indicated by D after the door position. The letter 't' after the door indicates the provision of a toilet whilst L after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

Re-registrations

Where a vehicle is re-registered its previous registration numbers follow in italic type, with the most recent given first where it has been registered more than once.

Vehicle reports should be sent to

J. G. Lidstone, 76 Thames Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2XD.

Please mark your envelope 'Fleet News'.



Arriva North West AA

Manchester is to gain 12 new Alexander-bodied DAF SB220s.

Dennis Lances 1293-6 have been moved from routes 300/X8 and are route-branded for 60 (Bootle-Aigburth). 100 (H130 CDB), a Mercedes-Benz 811D/LHE B33F earlier reported transferred to North East, has been sold to Dart, Paisley.

Arriva Southend AA

Two new body makes have been introduced to the fleet with the transfer of three Mercedes-Benz 709Ds from The Shires. 2072 (K578 YOJ) has a Dornobile Routemaker B29F body and was new to Patterson, Birmingham; 2086/7 (L326/7 AUT) have Leicester Carriage Builders B25F bodies and were new to Midland Fox. 2072/86 were the last additions delivered to the fleet before London Road garage closed, as reported last month, on 28 January.

The last buses to run out into service from London Road that morning were Dennis Dart 3387 and Leyland Fleetline 5237. At 08.30, my former colleague Bernard Morgan took the operations control log to the new site at Short Street aboard Volvo B10M-60 4322. Demolition commenced as soon as the keys were handed over the following day.

The use of Leyland Lynx 3339 (E889 KYW) for driver training lasted just a few days; it was replaced by the loan of Arriva Training Services' Lynx LX112TL11ZR1R 3065 (E965 PME), new to Atlas Bus, later with Yellow Bus, Stoke Mandeville and latterly with The Shires. Rear seating is removed and an instructor's position installed behind the driver.

The Shires' Mercedes-Benz 811D/Reeve Burgess Beaver B31F 2058 (H408 FGS) was transferred briefly to Southend, but was not used.

Arriva The Shires AA

The 8.8m Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD B29F, 3280-94 (V280-94 HBH), are in service.

Arriva Yorkshire AA

New are Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD B29F 201-21/3-9 (V201-21/3-8 PCX, V229 XUB); there won't be a 222. Instead of route branding, 201-10 carry 'Easy Access Great Value with Network Wakefield' lettering. 201-19 are at Belle Isle, 220 is at Selby and 223-9 are at Castleford. They have replaced Mercedes-Benz Vario minibuses and route-branded Optare MetroRiders; of the latter, 737/8/42-4 are with Yorkshire West at Dewsbury, and 746/8 at Castleford.

No sooner had I mentioned that all the Dennis Arrows were in service when 508 suffered accident damage and was despatched to Leicester for repairs.

The programme of Leyland Lynx II refurbishment has been completed with 337.

Varios 759/68-70 (R759/68-70 DUB) have been withdrawn, along with older Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 771/6/80-3 (L771/6 RWW, N780-3 EUA). Plaxton-bodied 811D 773 (L773 RWW) has gone to Arriva Midlands North along with withdrawn Leyland Lynxes 284, 301 (F284, 301 AWW).

Astons, Worcester

Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814 R312 EHS unusually has Adamson C24F bodywork.

Avon, Moreton

New Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD V260 BNV is at work.

Avon, Prenton, Wirral

Three ex-London General Marshall Minibuses, P402/4/9 KAV, have joined Dennis Darts on service 82/3 (Birkenhead-Heswall), but are also for newly secured Wirral routes 112/3/4.

Group codes

AA — Arriva Passenger Services
BL — Blazeifield Holdings
DG — DelGro
EY — EYMS Group
FG — FirstGroup
GA — Go-Ahead Group
NX — National Express Group
SG — Status Bus & Coach Group
ST — Stagecoach Holdings
YT — Traction Group

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Avon Coaches
BASED:	North Chester Trading Estate, Prenton, Wirral, Merseyside; also has an out-station at Bootle. Prenton site is a high quality depot with painting facilities which also draw in work from other operators.
FOUNDED:	15 years ago by present proprietor Larry Smith
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Half-hourly 82/83 local bus service links Birkenhead with West Kirby and Heswall, a distance of 15 miles in each direction. Has just secured contract for Wirral routes 112/3/4. Also operates schools services on Wirral and in the Bootle area.
LIVERY:	Cream and blue
HOW MANY VEHICLES	Current fleet is 19: 10 double-deckers for school contracts, nine midibuses for local bus routes.
MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLES?:	Recently acquired trio of Marshall Minibus midis from London General, bought for expanded services. They work alongside an R and an S-registered Dennis Dart delivered new, four MCW Metroriders, six ex-London Leyland Titans and four ex-Stagecoach Dennis Dominators — three from Hull and one from Transit.

Below:
P409 KAV, one of the trio of London General Marshall Minibuses acquired in January by Avon Coaches for its expanded bus operations, passing the Dee Hotel in West Kirby.
R. L. WILSON



Opposite:
Last month, a reader suggested in 'Millar's Tales' that Plaxton had named its new Paragon after Hull's railway station of the same name. Judge for yourselves whether the station, seen behind Applebys' TPC 105X, a Leyland Tiger/ECW acquired last year from Northern Bus, looks at all like a new Plaxton. What we can say is that the coach's front end bears no resemblance to the original built at Lowestoft when it was supplied new to London Country.
DAVID LONGBOTTOM

Axe Valley, Seaton, Devon

Acquired is Iveco 59.12/Dormobile B29F K332 RCN from Phil Anslow, Pontypool.
East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlantean DDK 24W has been sold to a dealer; Dormobile-bodied Renault S56 PYP 553Y, Reeve Burgess-bodied S56 D144 LTA and Duple-bodied Bedford YRQ JCV 411N have been withdrawn.

B Line, Royston, South Yorks

Former Oxford Bus MCW Metrorider MF150/51/B25F E758 XWL is at work in two-tone green.

Bakers Dolphin, Weston-Super-Mare

The last Bristol VRT/SL3 here, PHY 700S, has been laid up pending a decision on its future.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10Ms 8, 9 (L956/62 LNW) are in stock from Wallace Arnold, while new coaches delivered last year were B10M-62/Van Hool Alizée T9 C49Ft 5, 6 (T761/2 TYB) and B7R/Plaxton Prima C57F 104 (T920 UEU).

Plaxton Supreme-bodied Bedford YMTs JTM 107V, HDV 97V, TUA 161W, YAA 131V and YRT DHR 378V have been sold.

Barnsley & District YT

Three ex-Nottingham Volvo B6s are expected here.

Renault S56s 150/1 (E703/4 UEM) have been withdrawn and sold with similar D677 UEM.

Bath Bus Company

Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Darts Dart1/2 (M387/9 KVR) have been replaced on city services to Coombe Down by Plaxton Pointer-bodied SLFs Dart3/4 (P741/2 HND). Expansion in city services last November brought two more Pointer-bodied SLFs from Mistral, Dart5/6 (P748 HND, N606 WND).

Mercedes-Benz 609D/Robin Hood C20F 461/71/7 (E461 CGM etc), ex-Express Travel, Liverpool, are used on local authority rural contracts and Sunday city services.

Ex-Cardiff Alexander-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 WTG 360T has replaced ex-PMT Bristol VRT/SL2 232 ENX (PHE 816M) and has been sold for preservation in Abus livery. VRT/SL2 NCD 563M has been sold to Hoare, Chepstow (dealer) and has been on loan to Jackie's, Quedgeley.

Fleet livery is primrose and post office red.

My thanks to Martin S. Curtis of Bath Bus Company for this welcome update on his fleet.

Bebb, Llantwit Fardre

New are Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Premiere 320 C53F V56-59, 61 KWO.

Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Autobus C29F R91 GWO is in fleet livery for local bus work.

Setra S250 Specials R37-39, 41 AWO have returned to Evobus, Coventry (dealer); Bova Futura Clubs R56-59, 61 EDW are also sold.

Bennetts, Gloucester

Unusual replacements for Bristol VRT school buses are DAF SB220/Hispano Carrocera CAP 11 and G293 CLE, ex-Capital Logistics, West Drayton but new to TIBS, Singapore; their two-door bodies have been rebuilt to B66F by Bulwark Engineering.

Van Hool-bodied DAF K508 RJX has been on loan.

The last Ford, XAD 174X, has been withdrawn following serious accident damage.

The Big Bus Company, London SW17

Leyland Titan A638 THV has appeared with a retractable roof and with a perspex rear upper deck area in place of its windows.

Birmingham Coach Company, Tividale

Leyland Nationals NEL 860M, AKY 612T, BAL 609T, HSC 106T, SKF 17T and YPF 774T have Volvo engines.

Black Prince Buses, Morley

The steady flow of Newport Scania double-deckers continues, with N112DRB/East Lancs H43/33F 30/1/3/4 (C30 ETG etc) received and 29, 32 (C29, 32 ETG) expected to follow.

Like F425/6/8 GWG, ex-MTL Alexander-bodied Scania F421-4/7/9 GWG have reverted to their original H47/33F layout (ex-H43/33F) with rear-facing seats in front of the rear bench seat.

Ex-Newport Marshall-bodied Scania BR112DHs 88, 90/1/5, 100 (PTG 95Y etc) have been sold to Wigley, Carlton (dealer).

Recent mass scrapping of the ex-Newport vehicles have left just 84, 92 (JBO 84, 92W) and 96 (PTG 96Y) of the earlier BR112DHs in stock, and 82/9 (JBO 82, 89W), 93/4, 101 (PTG 93Y etc) awaiting the cutter's torch along with Alexander-bodied BR112DH RND 881X (JFT 414X).

The unique ex-London Buses dual-staircase Volvo Ailsa, A103 SUU, is still in Black Prince's workshops, over seven years after it was acquired. It is the only Ailsa left in this fleet.

Recently repainted Leeds Suburban Wadham Stringer-bodied Scania single-decker 16 (RUH 16Y) has been withdrawn.

Blue Triangle, Rainham

The eight Leyland Lynxes acquired for Jubilee Line emergency cover ('In London' March) are DB101-8 (F78/5/7 DDA, E34 EVW, E968 PME, E677 DCU, E967 PME, E678 DCU). DB101-3 are ex-Travel West Midlands, DB104 is ex-Arriva Cymru (new to Colchester), DB105/7 were new to Atlas Bus and DB106/8 to Moor-Dale.

Boomerang Bus (Warner), Tewkesbury

One ex-Cardiff bus has replaced another, with Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/East Lancs H43/31F A516 VKG displacing Alexander-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 CTX 397V to Cotswold Flying Club, Aston Down.

Former London United Dennis Dart 8.5SDL3003 G508 VYE, G44/7 TGW with Dartline bodies by Duple (508) and Carlyle (44/7) have been acquired. 508 has been re-registered RIL 9776, while previously-acquired H577 MOC has become RIL 9774 and similar H135 MOB has emerged from a long period in the workshops with a Plaxton Pointer front.

Dart L881 YVK has been re-registered RIL 9772.

Bowers, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire

Former Trent Leyland National 11351A/1R/B49F PRR 455R, 11351A/2R/B52F URB 467S and 11351A/2R/B50F XAL 484/5/8/9S have replaced vehicles lost in the fire last September; Trent repainted 455/67/85 in Unibus livery.

Brijan, Southampton

Ex-Solent Blue Line Bristol VRT/SL3/501(6LXB)/ECW H43/31F LHG 457/9T are in stock as is former Derby Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Dominator NRR 108W ex-Arrow of Pulborough.

Bristol International Airport FG

Ex-CentreWest Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs R677-80 MEW are based here, still in Heathrow Express silver. East Lancs-bodied Scania N112s D156/7 XYJ are out of use.

Camden Coaches, Sevenoaks

The MCW Metrobus fleet has grown to eight with QJD 847Y and A913 SUL from London General. From the same stable come Dennis Dart 8.5SDL/Wright Handybus B30F JDZ 2349-51/4/7 and Dart 8.5SDL/Plaxton Pointer B28F H550 XGK.

Cardiff Bus

201-15 (R201-15 DKG), the Optare Excel L1150/B42F new in November 1997, are to be sold to Reading Buses in May and June.

Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Ailsas 401-11/5/7/9/23/5/7/35 have been refurbished, complete with electronic indicator displays and are in the 'more white' version of the orange livery.
Leyland Olympians 509/12 (RBO 509Y, A512 VKG) have joined 566 (C566 GWO) and Optare MetroRider 166 (G166 HWO) as permanent driver trainers. Previous Olympian trainers 553/61 (B553 ATX, C561 GWO) were withdrawn and advertised for sale, but have been reinstated.

Coastal Continental, Barry

Ex-Cardiff Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/Alexander H44/31F CTX 391V is in stock.

East Yorkshire 890 (AVK 177V), an 86-seat Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R, is one of three Atlanteans transferred recently from the Finglands fleet in Manchester and now in the Scarborough & District division.
DAVID LONGBOTTOM



Connex Bus, Croydon

The 29 9.9m Dennis Trident SFD123/Alexander ALX400 H45/20D for London Transport route 3/N3 are TA1-20/2-30 (V301 KGW etc). They are in LT red with a blue skirt, as is secondhand MCW Metrobus BYX 140V. Fourteen 8.9m Dennis Dart SLFs with Alexander ALX200 bodywork are due for route 322.

Duple-bodied G501/25 VYE and Carlyle-bodied G41 TGW, ex-London United Dennis Dart 8.5SDL3003, are being refurbished for a rail feeder operation planned for Lewes.

Cottrell, Mitcheldean

Former Fuggles, Benenden Dennis Dart 9.8SDL/Wadham Stringer Portsdown M9 FUG has replaced Leyland Lynx F66 SMC, sold to Maypole, Ormskirik.

Courtney, Bracknell

New 9.2m Optare Solo V395 KVV is at work in white and blue livery.

Cresswell, Evesham

Mercedes-Benz 711D/Plaxton C25F L568 WGC (*L2 HCT*) has been re-registered J2 NNC.

Cygnet, Darton, Barnsley

Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard 21 (MFR 306P) has been sold for preservation.

Dangerfield, Swindon

New Autobus Nouvelle 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario V328 XDO is at work.

Dawlish Coaches

Optare MetroRider/B26F K427 HWY is in use on Dawlish town service 186 in cream with red skirt.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham

Coach orders call for 11 Plaxtons, two Mercedes-Benz/Hispano Vitas and one Jonckheere Monaco-bodied Volvo B12 for London work.

Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin P744 GNU has gone to Mayne, Buckle.

East End Motors, Clydach

Eight Bristol VRs in stock are VRT/SL2s HBD 166N, HDL 410N and VRT/SL3s OVV 847R, RRP 816R, VPR 489S, HUP 763T, TWR 465W and WTU 473W. HUP and TWR still carry the cream and brown livery of former owner Carlton Coaches, Carlton-le-Moorland.

East Yorkshire **EY**

Twenty-one Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD 28-seaters are expected to replace Mercedes-Benz 811Ds, with four due in February, the others in April. Three will replace Varios on new service 154 (Hull Royal Infirmary-Castle Hill Hospital).

Four single-deckers and four minibuses (including Vario 449) have been drafted into Scarborough to replace Applebys services banned by the Traffic Commissioner ('News' January).

National Express-liveried Volvo B10M/Plaxton 59 (J159 HAT) has been reallocated to East Yorkshire Coaches duties, resealed to C51Ft and given Duple 340 coach 32's EYD 1T registration; 32 has reverted to D32 OKH.

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlantean 934 (SRJ 734R) is still in service with Scarborough & District and has been joined there by recently arrived ex-Finglands Atlanteans 890, 936/7.

Ex-Devon General convertible open-top Bristol VRT/SL3 836 (VDV 136S) is to become an all-yellow tree-lopper, numbered 8836. Elderly VRT/SL open-topper 837 (DRB 307H) has been used as a temporary tree-lopper.

Ebley Coaches, Ebley, Glos

Leyland National NTC 633M has been replaced by Leyland Leopard PSU3F/5R/Duple Dominant III C53F IIB 8903, ex-K. B. Coaches. Duple 425 A6 ECS has been sold and its registration is now carried by a Van Hool-bodied DAF SB3000.

Edgington, Honeybourne

Recently acquired Mercedes-Benz 609D/Holloway C24F G526 SJR has joined 711D M437 PTH on Thursday service 543 (Tewkesbury-Evesham), recently taken over from Swanbrook.

Ellison, Ashton Keynes

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B40F P212 RWR is at work on Gloucestershire service E35 (Lechlade-Cirencester). Unusually, council contract numbers (R203/R204) are shown at front and rear rather than the route number.

Emsworth & District, Hants

Ex-Oxford MCW Metrorider/B25F G778/9 WFC are in stock.

Plaxton-bodied Bedford YMTs FTO 558V and OPC 35R have been sold. Metrorider LIL 3068 (*E148 NAO*) has passed to West Sussex Police for training exercises.

Ensignbus, Purfleet

Following the sale of most of the fleet to Town & Country (q.v.), Leyland National 2s 701/2 (LSD 732W, LSJ 871W) and articulated Leyland-DAB 700 (RLN 233W) have been retained, although all three were on loan to Town & Country last year.

First Badgerline **FG**

Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B40F 1732-8 (V732-8 FAE) and Volvo B6BLE/Wright Crusader DP36F 1810 (V810 EFB) have entered service at Bath.

Former demonstration Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B40F 1911 (R460 VOP) has been acquired. Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Lance 9978 (P97 BPL) has been noted on service X39 (Bath-Bristol). Acute driver shortages in Bath have led to the complete withdrawal of services 11 (Southdown), 13A/B (Foxhill/Bathford) and 14A/B (Odd Down) and to a reduction of 5 (Whiteway).

A local service in Glastonbury has been transferred to Southern National, along with Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver 3899 (L899 VHT). Dennis Dart 255 has been rebuilt after sustaining major accident damage.

Dennis Dart 206 (L206 SHW) and Ivecos 8144/343 (J144/3 KPX) have been transferred to Southern National, Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 3896/7, 7802 (L896/7 VHT, L802 SAE) to CityLine, Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool 2502 (D502 GHY) to CityLine/Durbins and Leyland Olympians 9504/15/26/74/1/2 (JHU 903/14X, LWS 42/3Y, NTC 140/1Y) to Wessex.

Bristol VRT/SL3s 5542/5 (EWS 750/3W) have been exported to Panama City in Central America and 5550 (STW 26W) to New York Apple Tours.

Thanks to FirstGroup Enthusiasts Club (Details: SAE to Kelvin Amos at 30 Blandford Close, Nailsea, Bristol, BS48 2QQ) for much of the above.

First BeeLine **FG**

Further ex-Glasgow Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere C55F are P770/1 XHS, similar to 742-6 (R342-6 GHS), while additional ex-CentreWest Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Darts are DW74/9, 106 (JDZ 2374/9, KDZ 5106); similar DW100/4-7 were lent back to CentreWest for Christmas/New Year park-&-ride duties in Bromley.

To amplify last month's report, Scania L94UBs SW826-32 include the Reading park-&-ride buses reported earlier in error as Volvos. SW832 is in 'Barbie' livery; SW828/9 are confirmed in a Fasttrack park-&-ride livery which bears an uncanny resemblance to both the style and colours of Arriva corporate livery.

Volvo B12T RailAir Link coaches VP701-7 have become VPT701-7.

Withdrawal of RW20, 42/9, 50/1 (HDZ 5420) removes the last of these unpopular ex-London Renault S75/Wright midis from the fleet. Leyland Lynx DP LX800 (F101 GRM) has been sold to Western National, and Volvo B10M-60/Jonckheere coaches VJ782/3/6/9/90 (TJI 4822/3/6/9/20) have gone to First Cymru.

First Bradford **FG**

New Volvo B10BLE/Wright 1059-73 are being delivered.

First Mainline Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/Roe driver trainers 9108/14 (XWG 624/31T) have been on loan.

Atlanteans 6359/60 (VWW 359/60X) have gone to First Leeds.

First Calderline **FG**

Dennis Dominator 5551 (NKU 207X), still in Mainline colours, has seen little service other than school duties; Dominator NKU 161X has returned to MASS Engineering, Anston.

Leyland Fleetline 7258 (DWH 686W), purchased from First Manchester in January 1999 withdrawn a month later without being repainted, has been reinstated, while Fleetline 7238 (TWH 693T) has been withdrawn.

9744/6, the Mercedes-Benz Vario and Dennis Dart SLF loaned from Mistral Bus & Coach, have been returned. Unusually, Vario 2410 has been on loan to Bradford for its service 674.

Renault S75/Wright B28F HDZ 5485 is an unlikely acquisition from First Leicester for driver training, numbered 9437.

First Capital **FG**

Due around the end of April are 22 10.5m Dennis Trident/Alexander GLX400 double-deckers which will

displace shorter TP-class Tridents from route 25 to the 97 and 357 at Walthamstow, and 39 Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capitals — 13 9.3m models for the 308 and W11 and 26 10.2m models for the 212 and 236.

Docklands Light Railway-liveried Optare Excel 701 has been repainted all-red (like DML-class) rather than red/yellow. Excels 701-4 and Dart SLFs 705-17 are to receive wheelchair ramps and parking spaces this year in a rolling programme.

More MCW Metrobuses withdrawn are 100-2/6/10/1/4/5/7 (JHE 144/71/2/57/70/56/62/82/47W), 175/6 (DAE 510/2W), 276/7 (FUT 36/7V), 295 (JWF 495W), 307/11 (BYX 287, 311V), 312/3/32/9 (EYE 339/43/22/19V) and 318 (KYV 668X). 100-2/10/7/75/6, 295 went to First Southampton, 276, 311/3/32/9 to Western National and 106/11/4/5, 277, 307/12/8 have been scrapped.

First CentreWest **FG**

Forty-three new Dennis Tridents for route 207 are due around now.

The 19 Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B28D for Tramlink feeder routes T31/2 at Orpington are DML362-80 (V362-80 HLH). They are in red and white tram livery.

Volvo Olympians VN888-907 now carry revised fleetnumbers VN88-107.

Darts DW100/4-7 have returned to BeeLine.

MCW Metrobus M358 (GYE 358W) has been withdrawn, while M329 has been sold for scrap and M397, 497 are being cannibalised by First Edinburgh. Renault S75s RW58, 83 have gone to First Manchester.

First CityLine **FG**

As illustrated in 'Fleet News Scotland' last month, Dennis Trident/East Lancs Pyoneer 9701 (V701 FFB) is touring Britain in a BP advertising livery. It will join similar 9702-9 (V702-9 FFB) on Bristol City Council's Brislington park-&-ride scheme, all in a new livery.

Twenty-two Volvo B7L/Alexander low-floor double-deckers are due around now, with 12 Volvo B6LEs expected in March/April.

First Leeds articulated Volvo B10LA 1115 (V115 LVH) was noted in Bristol in December.

Transfers from Badgerline are Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 3896/7, 7802 (L896/7 VHT, L802 SAE), repainted in CityLine colours, and Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool 2502 (D502 GHY) with Durbins.

Acquisitions for training are Ford Transits E202/4 BDV, ex-Southern National and converted into eight-seat assessment vehicles, together with Volvo B9M/Plaxton C256 CFG.

Withdrawals are of Bristol VRT/SL3s 5140/6/51 (AHU 517/23V, AHW 201V) and Ivecos 7591/6 (E571 NFB, F596 OHT).

Exotic disposals are of VRs with 5140 (AHU 517V) and 5542 (UWS 750W) following others to Transporte Dan, Panama City and 5151/558 (AHW 202V, STW 31W) going to New York Apple Tours. The Panama vehicles have offside centre doors, with two front seats occupying the redundant front platform.

First Cymru **FG**

Volvo B10M-60/Jonckheere Deauville P50 C55F 117-21 (TJI 4822/3/6/9/20, *F772/3/56/9 OJH, J740 TDP*) have been acquired from BeeLine.

Leyland Tiger/Alexander TE 185 (A693 OHJ), Mercedes-Benz 814Ds 329/36/42/9(F329/36/42 FCY, G349 JTH), 811D 385 (H852 OWN), 709Ds 413/32/5 (F603 AWN, F721/49 FDV), Leyland National 815 (AWN 815V), Bristol VRT/SL3s 946 (XHK 234X), 948/9 (UAR 588/98W), 976/89/95 (BEP 976/89V, EWN 995W), Leyland Atlantean/Alexander 952/62 (TGG 739R, LSU 379V) and Atlantean/Northern Counties 956/7/63 (A748 NNA, A675/94 HNB) have all been withdrawn.

Mercedes 228 went to St John Ambulance, Carmarthen, Mercedes 814D 328 went to Pickford, Chippenham, 709Ds 415/7 and VRs 948/55 to Western National, Leyland Nationals 798/9 to First Midland Red and 815 to University of Glamorgan.

Former **Davies, Pencader** vehicles were numbered as follows:

Leyland Tiger 140-9/51/2/4-6 (FIL 7131, 5519; 9616 DD, F612 RBX; 8853, 8098, 2405, 7660, 6690 DD; MIB 657; 1923 DD: AKU 327X). Leyland Leopards 707-11 (3338, 3475 DD, GOE 371W, OUT 11W and FEK 1F). 711's registration was first used on a Wigan Leyland PD2.

Mercedes-Benz 609D 260-4 (G304 YBX, E270-82 TTH).

Mercedes-Benz 709D 271-4 (H881 EBX, G51 OUB, H61 WNN, G63 SNN). Mercedes-Benz 811D 387-93 (M257/8/52-6 CDE).

Several elderly Bristols and Leylands were scrapped at Pencader last year. The Willowbrook Warrior-bodied Leopards were sold along with other Leopards and some Tigers; Tigers 144/54/5 are confirmed withdrawn.

Group codes	
AA	— Arriva
PA	— Passenger Services
BL	— Blazefield Holdings
DG	— DelGro
EY	— EYMS Group
FG	— FirstGroup
GA	— Go-Ahead Group
NX	— National Express Group
SG	— Status Bus & Coach Group
ST	— Stagecoach Holdings
YT	— Traction Group

FLEET FACT

The Willowbrook Warrior

The Warrior — referred to this month in reports from First Cymru and Vintage Yellow Buses — was the last bus body from the latterly much scaled-down Willowbrook company in Loughborough. It looked vaguely like the Leyland Lynx and first appeared in 1987 on a new Bedford YMT just as Bedford closed down; thereafter, it established a short-lived niche for itself as a workmanlike body for reconditioned Leyland Leopard chassis at a time when many larger operators were reluctant to buy new vehicles, but production ended around 1991, shortly before the new bus market began to recover. Towards the end, a Warrior body was supplied on a new ACE Cougar demonstrator later owned by the now defunct Caves of Shirley which also operated that first Warrior-bodied YMT.

First Dorset Transit FG

New at Weymouth are Volvo B6LE/Wright B36F 1802-9 (V802-9 EFB), numbered in the Badgerline/CityLine series as Southern National/Dorset Transit are managed by the Bristol companies.

Also at work here are Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton 860/1 and Ford Transits 341/7/83, together with Vario/Plaxton V995 NNB on hire from Mistral Bus & Coach.

Varios 854-9 and 709D/Alexander 950/1 have been transferred to Southern National.

First Eastern Counties FG

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD B29F demonstrator S551 WAT is understood to have been acquired and numbered 364; it was borrowed earlier and carried temporarily fleetnumber 2010.

50 (N614 APU) is the latest of Thamesway's City Saver Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Premieres to ebb across here.

First Eastern National FG

New Dennis Dart SLFs 739-44 relaunched service 42 at Chelmsford in company with the 47-year old Bristol KSW5G open-topper 2383 and a Leyland National 'to show changes in bus design'. Even though this took place in December, the KSW carried most passengers.

First Huddersfield FG

Allover green Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 412D/Olympus B14FL 2122 (V903 WUB) — similar to 2121 on service 900 — has been added for Marsden minibus services.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer SPD B41F demonstrator P739 TMO has on loan; it came from First Midland Red.

First Leeds FG

Scania L94UB/Wright Access Flioline B43F 8136 (V136 ESC) has returned from loan to First Edinburgh.

Allover orange MCW Metrobus DR102/38/MCW H46/30F 7541/6/7 (A541 KUM etc) have returned from loan to First Manchester after a period on loan and are allocated to Kirkstall; 7541 has since gone to Mainline's Rotherham workshops with accident damage sustained in December on Rossett school service R62.

Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde B49F P453 BPH has been on loan at Cherry Row numbered 1202. It previously operated with First Midland Red.

Scania N113CRB 8602 has moved to **Quickstep Travel**.

Leyland Atlantean driver trainers 9280 and 9339 have been on loan to First Bradford, while Bradford Atlanteans 6359/60 (VWW 359/60X) have moved to Leeds.

Atlantean 6251 (KWY 251W) has been withdrawn.

First London Buslines FG

LOTS reports that Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital 648 (R648 TLM), branded for route 105, was destroyed by fire in Kingston on 4 February while operating route 285.

First Mainline FG

Although 130 new vehicles were expected over the next three years, the 26 new low-floor double-deckers which were to have been mixed in with single-deckers on services 53, 60 and 97, have been diverted to CityLine in Bristol and no new buses are currently on order.

Capacity problems with single-deckers prompted the daytime use of double-deckers on 31 December.

Dennis Dominator 2149 (NKU 149X) has passed to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

Leyland Tiger school bus 79 (HHJ 379Y) has returned from its sojourn in Kent.

First Manchester FG

Ex-BeeLine Renault S75/Wright B28F 1923-5 are HDZ 5439-41. The London Omnibus Traction Society reports that similar HDZ 5458/83 have joined them.

First Northampton FG

New here are 'Barbie' buses Scania L94UB/Wright Access Flioline B43F 362-4 (V362-4 CNH).

Ex-Lincoln Bristol VR 46 was still running in late-January.

First PMT FG

A surprising acquisition at Crewe is Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/2/7D 628 (AHU 514V) from Provincial; it was acquired for contracts work, but has also been in normal service with the centre doors fastened shut. Also acquired, but from Eastern National, were its little-used Volvo B10M-61/Duple Dominant B55F 884/5 (D497/9 NYS).

The post-Christmas vandal attack at Chester ('News' February) led to the hire of Leicester Renault S75s 703/4, and Midland Red Mercedes-Benz Varios 526/36. Thanks to these and buses from PMT depots at Burslem, Moreton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Rock Ferry and the Pennine operation, Chester ran a full service while its own buses were being repaired.

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 897-9 have been downseated from DPH42/30F to DPH42/27F.

Sales have seen Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 337/51/3 (G337 XRE, H351/3 HRF) and 709Ds 432/3/5/43/7/80/1 (K432/3/5/43/7 XRF, H480/1 JRE) pass to Western National; L609Ds 452/5 (D452/5 ERE) to Enza, Lower Whitley (dealer); Mercedes L307D 112 (XRF 2X), 609Ds 475/9 (F475 VEH, E384 XCA) and Renault S56s 502/7/12/22 (E802 HBF etc) to Erith Commercial (dealer); Leyland Leopard 296 (BVP 783V) and Bristol VRT/SL3s 715/25 (GRF 715V, NEH 725W) to PVS, Barnsley (dealer) for scrap, along with un-numbered ex-Northampton Leopard FRX 868T which was acquired for spares.

It appears that the decision to drop three-letter prefixes from fleetnumbers was a local decision and not part of a national policy. Reader Robert Clark tells me that from his contacts with FirstGroup, headquarters support such things.

First Provincial FG

660-9 (M314-23 YOT), Dennis Dart 9SDL/Plaxton Pointer B35F, have been transferred to Hoeford from First Southampton where they were numbered 1314-23.

Bristol VRT/SL3 509 and Iveco 59.12 has lost their experimental First Hampshire livery in favour of red/cream.

Diesel-electric hybrid Mercedes-Benz 609D 100 (VCL 461) and Iveco 59.12 240 (K621 XOD) have been reinstated at Hilslea.

Withdrawals are of 59.12s 233-5/7/9-42/5/6/8/50/4/5/7/66 (K723/8/9 UTT, K802 WFJ, K619/21-3 XOD, K912/4/6/8/22/3/9 VDV, L317 BOD), Mercedes-Benz 811D 801/11 (H171, 783 GTA) and Leyland Atlanteans 1224/5 (PBP 224/5S) and Leyland National 323 (LTP 934R). 801 was not used at Southampton and 233 was withdrawn after return from loan to Western National.

Sales are of Bristol VRT/SL3 512 (AHU 514V) to PMT, Iveco 49.10 147 (H463 GTM), Leyland National 319 (SPR 40R) and Ford Transit 949 (B449 WTC) to C. D. Jordan, Portsmouth (for scrap).

First Red Bus FG

New Optare Solo/B25F 6801-3 (V801-3 KAF) are at Barnstaple.

Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F 1265 (UAR 588W) has been transferred from First Cymru and ex-Western National VRT/SL3/501 1229 (TWN 936S) — based at Exeter — is part-repainted, with lower half red and the remainder white with Red Bus fleetnames. Two Western National VRs are expected to be moved here on receipt of its MCW Metrobuses.

VRT/SL3s 1173/94/5 (FDV 785V, XAN 431T, AJH 855T) are renumbered **1303-5**; Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 764-9 (M764-9 FTT) became **6375-80**. Unusually, Bristol LH driver trainers 9703, 1618 and 3312 have been renumbered 9709-11.

Acquired Leyland Lynx 2606 (G261 LUG) has Red Bus fleetnames on Western National livery.

Ford Transit 190D/Dormobile B16F 374 (C936 GYD) and Iveco 49.10/Robin Hood B21F 397 (D112 DRV) have been acquired from Southern National's Norton Fitzwarren minibus stockpile and have been placed in store at Barnstaple. Even so, all remaining Transits, except those with seat belts for contracts, are due for withdrawal; 6005/7 have been withdrawn.

Hitherto all-white Dennis Dart 4009 is expected to return from accident repairs in FirstGroup 'Barbie' corporate livery.

Leyland Nationals 2800/1 are now resealed to B44F capacity and National 2812 is due for withdrawal.

First Rider Group FG

Withdrawn Leyland National 2 1368 (MHJ 726V), Leyland Olympian 5036 (CUB 36Y), Leyland Atlanteans 6180/248/51 (GWR 180T, KWY 248/51V) and Leyland Fleetline 7238 (TWH 693T) from the Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Calderline and York fleets have passed to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

First Southampton FG

MAN NL222FR/East Lancs B43F demonstrator N222 LFR has been on loan.

Further to January's report, ex-Capital all-MCW Metrobuses are replacing native East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlanteans. The first 18 allocated are DR103/4s 520-2 (DAE 510/2/3W), DR104/6s 523-6/30-5 (JHE 138/44/6/7/52/70-2/82/94W) and DR104/3s 536-40 (JWF 495-9W); seating layouts are DPH43/29F (520), DPH43/30F (521/2), H46/31F (523-6/30-5) and H46/30F (536-40). Liveries are Capital yellow (521/31/2/3/6), red with grey skirt (522) and plain red (523/5/30/7-40). 520 has already become permanent driver trainer 968. At the turn of the year, 521-4/6/31-4/6 were in reserve and 537 has been withdrawn for disposal.

Also awaiting disposal were Mercedes-Benz 811D 811 (H783 GTA), Dennis Dominator 1277 (A277 ROW), Leyland Atlantean Sprint single-deckers 1350-4 (OJL 1870-4) and Leyland Leopard CTM 406T. 1314-23 (M314-23 YOT), Dennis Dart 9SDL/Plaxton Pointer B35F, have been transferred to Provincial.

First Southern National FG

Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR/Alexander H43/31F 163/4 (GRU 163/4V) have been on loan from Yellow Buses, Bournemouth for school contracts.

A local service in Glastonbury has been transferred from Badgerline, along with Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver 3899 (L899 VHT).

Badgerline has also transferred Dennis Dart 206 (L206 SHW) and Iveco 49.10/Marshall B23F 8144/343 (J144/3 KPX) and we hear that many other secondhand vehicles are due immediately, to sweep away older and non-standard types.

Wright-bodied Volvo B6BLE demonstrator V805 EFB and Mistral-owned Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton V995 DNB have been on loan.

Recently refurbished Bristol VR 608 (OWE 851R) has been noted at the Norton Fitzwarren store.

Ford Transits 169/83/91 (E809 WDV, D783 NDV, D645 NOD), 315/39/45/61/71/47/785 (C877 DYD, C901/7/23/33/6/47 GYD) and 450/1 (B462 BHY, B106 XJO), Leyland Leopards 3558/66 (PRA 114R, GMS 291S), Volvo B58-56 6003 (CAV 624V), ex-Smith of Portland Bristol RELL6L 6004 (AHT 206J) — FirstGroup's last and only active RE — have all been withdrawn.

Bristol LHS 94 (FDV 789V), Plaxton-bodied LH6Ls 3305/9 (AFJ 728/9T), Leyland Nationals 2829/30 (MOD 829/52P), ex-Bere Regis Volvo B10M 9009 (ENF 561Y), Ivecos 112/3 (D112/3 DRV), Ford Transits 170/7, 220/3/7/32, 322/64/71 and 450 (E220 BDV, E817 WDV, D220/3/7/32 VCD, C884 DYD, C933/26 GYD, B462 BHY) have been cannibalised. Transits 374/97 have been transferred to Red Bus (q.v.).

In mid-January, the Norton Fitzwarren store also was home to ex-Smith Iveco 512 (F583 OOU), Transit 373 (C935 GYD), LH 3308 (AFJ 728T), Leopards 280 (DAD 253T) from Red Bus, 3563 (TSJ 74S), 7020 (YSV 739) in Taylor's livery, 8024 (NLD 7V) in Comfylux livery and West Dorset 9053 (AHG 947R), plus Bristol VRT/SL3 603 (LWG 846P).

First Wessex FG

Leyland Olympians 9504/15/26/7/41/2 (JHU 903/14X, LWS 42/3Y, NYC 140/1Y) have been transferred from Badgerline.

First Western National FG

Four more ex-First Capital all-MCW Metrobuses have arrived here, joining the six listed last month. They are JHE 148-50W (DR104/6/H46/31F) and DAE 513W (DR103/4/DPH43/29F); the fleetnumbers quoted last month were their Capital numbers. At least JHE 148W has been operating in Capital yellow with First Red Bus stickers.

As the company's submission for new double-deckers was refused, up to 15 five to seven-year old Volvo Olympians expected, possibly ex-Singapore models similar to PMT 700, to replace more Bristol VRs.

Due for withdrawal this year are VRs 1106/14/6-20/3/8/9/31/2 and 1228-30/2/6/8/59, Leyland Tiger coach 2200 and Leyland Leopard coaches 3444/53, 3500/14-6/23. VRT/SL3s 1187, 1237/52/3 (BEP 968/6V, PHY 697S, TWS 915T) are to transfer to North Devon along with Leopards 3510/2/3/50/80 (KUB 548V, ELJ 208V, GWU 529T, JTH 44W, VJT 738).

F101 GRM, the DP48F Leyland Lynx previously with CentreWest, has been acquired from BeeLine, while G337 XRE, H351/3 HRF, Mercedes-Benz 811Ds with uncommon PMT Ami B28F bodies, K432/3/5/43/7 XRF, Mercedes 709Ds/Plaxton B24F and H480/1 JRE, 709D/PMT B20F (480) and B25F, have come from PMT.

Bristol VR 1141 has been repainted in Tilling green and cream with yellow traditional-style fleetnames. Reserve Bristol VRT 1056 (OCK 997K) is earmarked for preservation.

First York **FG**

Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/Park Royal H43/33F 6458 (UPK 147S) has been transferred from First Leeds (Quickstep) while, after a period on loan from First Manchester, AN68B/1R/Northern Counties H43/32F 6463/4 (SND 471/4X) and AN68A/1R/Northern Counties H43/32F 6465 (SND 498X) have been acquired. 6463, at least, has been painted in the revised two-tone green livery shown in this month's 'Pictureview'.
First Leicester Dennis Dominator driver trainer 240 (FUT 240V) has returned home.
Former Eastern National Leyland National 1368 (MHJ 726V) has been scrapped.

Glenvic, Bristol

All five Bristol VRTs — VRT/SL2 PKE 805M new to Maidstone & District and VRT/SL3s WDM 342R new to Crosville, TWS 903/11T new to Bristol and XBO 116T new to National Welsh — have been sold.
Three ex-Mayne, Manchester Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlanteans are being acquired.

Go-Bus, Chesterfield

Former Harris Bus, Grays MCW Metrorider MF150/112/B24F F310 OVW is in stock.

Godson, Leeds

Ikarus-bodied DAF SB220s M763 RCP and N987 FWT, and Plaxton-bodied Volvo K136 KUM, have been sold.

Go North East **GA**

The first low-floor double-deckers top news of a total of 46 new vehicles delivered in recent weeks. Go Northern is operating Dennis Trident/East Lancs Lolyne 3801-4 (V201-4 EBR) from Bishop Auckland on the old OK service 724 (Bishop Auckland-Newcastle).
Go Wear Buses' 37 Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointers are MPD B25F 8186-200 (V186-99, 820 ERG) for services 126/133 (Sunderland-Pennywell/New Silksworth) and SPD B41F 8201-22 (V201-20, 822 ERG) for 151/152 (Sunderland-Peterlee) and 35/36 (South Shields-Peterlee).
Go Northern's five Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B44F, 4896-900 (V986-90 ETN) operate from Stanley on 765 (Durham-Castleside).
Despite suggestions to the contrary, all of London Central's DAF DB250/Optare Spectra H44/27F are being transferred here, as planned — with the exception of written-off SP14. First to arrive and enter service with Go Northern at Chester-le-Street was 3849 (K317 KYG), following partial refurbishment at Mainline. However, the entire batch, to be numbered 3834-57 and shared between Northern and Wear Buses, is to be re-registered K301-13/5-25 KRG and the Routemaster registration marks from SP17-20/5 have been retained in London.

Now withdrawn are: the last two ex-Oxford MCW Metroriders, 446/7 (F503/4 ANY), latterly used for crew shuttles; Optare MetroRiders 335-7/9/40/3/4/6 (J935 JJR etc); the last two indigenous Mk I MCW Metrobuses, 3489/91 (DVK 489/91W); Leyland Atlantean 3539 (MBR 439T); Leyland Olympians 3610/1 (JTY 370/1X), wheelchair-accessible Leyland National 4634 (KBR 634T); severely accident-damaged Leyland National 2 4676 (UPT 676V); and Volvo B10M-60 7041 (961 KVK).

Atlanteans traced to new owners are 3461/73 (AUP 361/73W) with Poynter, Wye; 3468/524 (AUP 368W, EJR 125W) with Appleby, Conisholme; while 3462/4/78/84 (AUP 362W etc) went for scrap. Olympians 3556/61 (MBR 456/61T) have also been scrapped, but 3596 (JTY 396X) went to East Yorkshire and Metrobus MkII 3626 (A626 BCN) passed to Earnside, Glenfarg.

Coaches traced to new owners are former driver trainer Scania K93CRB 4829 (G23 UJR) back in service with Shaw, Maxey; Leyland Tiger 5105 (C105 PCN) with Konect, South Wootton, 5117/20 (A717/20 ABB) with Stephenson, Easingwold, 5125 (B462 JVK) with Barnard Castle Coaches, Newsham and Duple re-bodied Tiger 9737 (LFT 6X, JJJ 3737, LFT 6X) with Blaengwawr School, Aberaman. Leyland Leopard driver trainer 9963 (SPT 963V) is with a Scottish preservationist.

Halton Transport

Youthful Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart 65 (M89 DEW) has been sold to Nip-on, St Helens.

Handy Bus, Warminster

A fifth MCW Metrorider acquired is B25F D671 NNE with less common Perkins engine.

Happy Al's, Birkenhead

Ex-Cardiff East Lancs-bodied Leyland Olympian C560 GWO is in stock.

Harrogate & District **BL**

Inward transfers from Keighley & District are Leyland Tiger TRCL10/3ARZA/Plaxton C55F 232/3/50 (G432/3/5 MWU) to replace Plaxton-bodied Tigers 244, 307 (JIL 2215/6); similar 234 is already with H&D. All three were repainted, although they are due for replacement in the spring.
Mercedes-Benz 222, the last manual gearbox vehicle in the fleet, is confined to service 142 (Ripon-York).
Leyland Lynx 381 (G381 MWU) has been transferred to Keighley & District.

Huxley's, Threapwood, Cheshire

Leyland National 2 HUF 625X, new to Southdown, has been acquired.

Isle Coaches, Owston Ferry, Lincs

Former London Coaches DAF SB220/Ikarus DP45F L511 KJX is in stock, while Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean JKW 300W has passed to Holloway, Scunthorpe.

Islwyn Borough Transport

An Alexander-bodied Scottish Leyland Leopard for the smallest Welsh municipal company is PSU3D/4R/AYS B53F 23 (YSF 83S) from Highland Country. It is in the latest livery of dark blue roof, white centre and pale blue skirt which is also worn by ex-Tillingbourne, Cranleigh Mercedes-Benz 811D/Dormobile Routemaster B29F 05 (H426 KPA) and 811D/Whittaker Europa B28F 07 and 14 (H428/9 KPD).
The last two Dodge GO8s, 48, 50 (D406/8 NUH) have been withdrawn. Willowbrook-bodied Leopard 3 (NTX 577R) has been sold for scrap, but Marshall-bodied Leopard 37 (GAX 137W) remains in service.

Keighley & District **BL**

Leyland Lynx LX112L10ZR1R/DP47F 281 (G381 MWU) has been transferred from Harrogate & District, but as it and the other Lynxes are due for imminent replacement, it has received K&D on H&D livery.
Leyland Tigers 232/3/50 (G432/3/5 MWU) have gone to Harrogate & District.

Leisurelink (Wales), Cardiff

Former West Midlands Leyland Fleetline TVP 869S is in stock.

Leon, Fittingly

Alexander-bodied Leyland Fleetline 118 (GSD 724V), fitted latterly with the engine from withdrawn Fleetline 126 (SDA 561S), was withdrawn at the end of last year with a chassis fault. Cannibalised MCW-bodied Daimler Fleetline 123 (NOC 435R) has gone to Doncaster Bus Breakers.

Leven Valley, Great Ayton

Further to February 'Fleet News', new Vario V717 GGE is now reported with Marshall bodywork.

Limebourne, London

MCW Metrobuses M73, 237/79, 477 and 719 (WYW 73T, BYX 237/79V, GYE 477W, KYV 719X) are at work, but M120/88 and 476 (BYX 120/88V, GYE 476W) have been withdrawn.

Group codes	
AA	— Arriva Passenger Services
BL	— Blazefield Holdings
DG	— DelGro
EY	— EYMS Group
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NX	— National Express Group
SG	— Status Bus & Coach Group
ST	— Stagecoach Holdings
YT	— Traction Group

Mechanical problems have forced First Southern National to withdraw 6004 (AHT 206J), the only Bristol RE to see active service with FirstGroup, even though many ran with its predecessors. The ECW-bodied RELL retained the blue livery of Smith's of Portland and was photographed last August, leaving Dorchester for Weymouth and Portland. DWR PICTURE LIBRARY



London Central/London General **GA**

The first Volvo B7Ls in the capital have aroused some interest, with 10.2m Alexander ALX400 H43/20D-bodied AVL1-29/31-6 delivered by February. Registrations are V101 LGC etc, **except** for AVL11, 21/3 (V211/21/3 LGC). There are to be 17 Plaxton President-bodied B7Ls at Bexleyheath. AVL1-19 are at Camberwell while AVL20 upwards (AVL20 was the first B7L in passenger service, on route 63 on 28 January) are at Peckham. They introduce a new fleet livery of red with a dark grey skirt, also worn by repainted ex-Docklands Express Volvo Olympians NV1/8.

Following the transfer of route 3 to Connex — Central ran Routemaster RML2275 on the last day, 4 February — DAF DB250/Optare Spectras SP1-13/5-25 are being transferred to Go North East. First to go was SP17 (170 CLT), re-registered K317 KYG, and SP25 (WLT 625) has become K159 PGO; however, as reported under Go North East, all 24 are to be issued with new local registrations.

M490 is another MCW Metrobus to be lent to Plymouth for driver recruitment/training, while M977 has become a trainer with General.

Vehicles withdrawn recently include: Leyland Titans T701/13/35/6/56 (OHV 701/13Y, WLT 735/6, OHV 756Y), T853 (A853 SUL), T970 (A970 SYE), T1008/9/23 (A608/9/23 THV), T1058/9/70 (A58/9/70 THX), T1105/9/11/23 (B105 WUV etc); Metrobuses M273 (BYX 273V), M480, 502 (GYE 480, 502W), M823/47/70 (OJD 823Y etc), M902/14/8/33 (A902 SUL etc) and M992 (A992 SYF); Optare MetroRiders MRL178 (H678 YGO), MRL196, 206 (J696, 706 CGK), 225/6/8/9/32-4/6/7/9-41 (K425 HWY etc); Freight Rover Sherpa trainer SC1 (D585 OOV); Dennis Dart/Plaxton DR50 (H550 XGK); and Dart/Wright DW49-51/4/7 (JDZ 2349 etc).

Disposals have seen T701/13/35/6/56, 853, 1008/9/23/105/9/11 go to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), T1058/9/70 to Southlands, Swanley, T1123 to White Rose, Thorpe, M273 to Halifax JOC (see last month), M847, 902/14/8/33/92, DR50 and DW49-51/4/7 to Camden, West Kingsdown and M823 to Anglia, Thorpe; the MRLs have also been sold.

Volvo B6LE VWL1 has returned from loan to London Traveller.

London Coaches

For park-&-ride services at the Millennium Dome, Arriva Bus & Coach has provided all-white Dennis Dart SLF/UVG R78/9, 83 GNW (last used on AirLinks' Heathrow Hotel Hoppa) and R104 GNW, S402/6 JUA (latterly with London Traveller), along with DAF SB220/Northern Counties Paladin B49F P904 PWW, which also worked with AirLinks.

Van Hool-bodied DAF SB3000s M571-4/6/7/9 RCP have been delicensed and former 726 Expresslink Ikarus-bodied SB220s L511-3 RJX sold to Isle, Owston Ferry (511) and Hornsby, Ashby (512/3).

London Traveller, Neasden **YT**

Ex-Metrobus, Orpington MCW Metrobuses GYE 447W and BYX 262V have donned red fleet livery. Hired Metrobuses GOG 233W and BYX 231V have been running in green/cream and London General livery respectively.

Privately-owned AEC Routemaster RM2198 (CUV 198C) continues to make frequent appearances, being noted on schools services 143, 302 and 626. Former Stagecoach Selkent Leyland Olympians C48, 64 CHM were noted at Harlesden in January and 48 worked school bus journeys on route H12 on 12 January.

The hired Dennis Dart SLFs and Volvo B6LE (December 'Fleet News') have been returned to their owners.

Leyland Olympian coach B689 BPU and Leyland Leopard CKE 170Y have been sold.

London United/Westlink

New for Shepherd's Bush route 72 are 10.1m Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B27D DPS1-16 (V801-3, 904, 805-16 KAG), while the first of Shepherd's Bush and Hounslow's long-awaited Volvo B7L/Alexander ALX400 H43/20D reported are numbered in the Olympian series as VA76-8/80 (V176 OOE etc).

The last two Routemasters to don London United livery were RML2463 and RML2702, but RML881/91 (WLT 881/91) have unfortunately been re-registered HSL 656/60.

Airbus Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale DPH43/9F A112-30 (N112-23 UHP, N124-30 YRW) passed to AirLinks on 5 February along with route A2 ('News' last month).

MCW Metrobuses M17, 29, 44, 52, 86 (WYW 17T etc) and M227 BYX 227V) have been withdrawn, with M29, 44 broken up by Wigley, Carlton (parts went to White Rose Travel); fire-damaged M526 has been scrapped.

By February, the active fleet of DT-class Duple and Carlyle-bodied Darts was down to DT12, 45/9, 74, 168, plus trainers DT15 and 75, according to LOTS. Further examples traced to new owners are DT1, 25, 41 (G501/25 VYE, G41 TGV) to Connex Bus; DT3 (G503 VYE), with Owen, Sidcup; DT4 (G504 VYE) with Sullivan, Potters Bar; DT8, 44/7 (G508 VYE, G44/7 TGV) with Boomerang, Tewkesbury; DT16, 26 (G516/26 VYE) with Southern Vectis; DT72/3 (H72/3 MOB) and DT155/63 (H155 MOB, H163 NON) with Pete's Travel, West Bromwich; DT80/2, 160 (H880 LOX, H82 MOB, H160 NON) with McKindless, Wishaw; and DT154 (H154 MOB) with Allison, Dunfermline.

Leyland Nationals LS84, 96/9, 195, 227/68, 335/7/95 (OJD 884/96/9R, THX 195, 227S, YYE 268T, AYR 335/7T, BYW 395V) have gone to Thorpe, Wembley, LS373/85 (BYW 373/85W) to Thames Valley Training and LS411/29 (BYW 411/29V) to White Rose.

Loonat, Batley

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Autobus Nouvelle 2 L923 JFU is at work.

Ludlow, Halesowen

Wright Access Fline-bodied Scania L94UB demonstrator S371 SET has been bought.

Leyland National 2 YWD 687 has regained its original GUW 484W registration.

Marchants, Cheltenham

Recently-acquired Leyland National 2 RDC 735X has been placed in service freshly in red and grey livery.

Marchwood, Totton, Hants

New here is Ikarus 481-bodied DAF SB220 V710 LWT in Solent Blue Line for contracted services.

Marshall, Sutton-on-Trent, Notts

Our first report of a W-registered psv is that this well-known operator and preservationist has taken delivery of MN54 (W3 YRR), an MAN 11.220/Berkhof Axial C35F.

MASS, North Anston, South Yorks

Leyland National NL116L11/1R/B49F LAG 188V and HWJ 620W have been acquired ex-Stagecoach East Midland.

Burton, Haverhill MCW Metrobus C953 LWJ has been noted at North Anston.

Mayne, Manchester

This operator, celebrating its 80th anniversary, was another to put W-registered coaches into service on 1 March. W81-3 JBN and W427/8 JBU are rear-engined Volvo B7Rs and W424/6 JBU are mid-engined B10Ms. All have Plaxton C55F bodies in a revised livery. The JBNs are based in Manchester, the JBUs at Warrington.

Metrobus, Orpington **GA**

Ten ex-Isle of Man Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B35F, previously registered CMN 9-13H, 103/5-8L, have been acquired.

Optare Excel 2/B35F demonstrator V511 KMY began six months' trials on route 358 from December to evaluate changes from the original Excel. Dart MPD demonstrator S838 VAG has been evaluated on route 281.

Dennis Tridents appear alongside Volvo Olympians on route 119 (Bromley-Croydon), but are reported sometimes shunned by passengers because of the Tridents' moulded plastic seats.

Orpington driver trainer MCW Metrobus 352 (BYX 352V) has been used occasionally in service at Lewes.

Metroline **DG**

Seventeen Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer are expected in June to displace Northern Counties-bodied Darts from route C2.

Carlyle-bodied Darts DT138/40 have been reinstated.

MCW Metrobuses M639/40 and 804 are correctly registered KYV 639X etc and not KYO.

Optare B49F-bodied DAF SB220 F848 YJX, Ikarus B50F-bodied SB220 H539 YCX and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright NimBus B26F MW20, 32/4/5 (NDZ 7920 etc) have been withdrawn. MW20, 34 have been sold to Fleetlink, Liverpool (dealer) while similar MW18, 26 are with MK Metro. The sales of withdrawn Metrobuses M33, 229/72, 481, 574 were cancelled, but withdrawn M139 has been sold for scrap.

MK Metro **SG**

NDZ 7918/26, Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright NimBus B26F, have come from Metroline London Northern.

Newport Transport

The new Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 for this hitherto loyal Scania customer ('News' last month) are 35-40 (V35-38, 140 HTG) with excellent lower-deck seating capacity in their H49/30F bodies. They operate service 18 to Bettws. Like last year's Scania L94UBs, 38-40 are painted dark green/cream, but also have large 'wave' graphics (like an upturned 'Q') depicting a controversial local monument of similar style. The others entered traffic in unlettered silver (35), blue/red (36) and yellow (37), ready for overall advertisements to be applied. They are *not* Newport's first Dennises, but are the first since 1954-6, when a Falcon, a Lancet J10C and 12 Lancet UFs were supplied with bodywork by Dennis dealer D. J. Davies.

Scania N112DRB/East Lancs H43/33F 30-34 (C30-34 ETG), leaving just 29 of this batch still in Newport. 27/8, 30/1/3/4 have followed many former shed mates to Black Prince, Morley and 29, 32 were expected to move north, too.

Nottingham City Transport

All 13 Volvo B6s, 501-13 (L501-10 OAL, M511-3 TRA) of 1994/95, have been sold to the Traction Group, for Yorkshire Terrier, three for Barnsley & District. All have Alexander Dash B40F bodies except for 511, rebodied in 1997 with a rare step-entrance East Lancs Spryte.

Oakleaf, Cariton

Mercedes-Benz 709D/PMT Ami DP29F H304 HUT is in stock, new to Scraggs, Stoke-on-Trent.

Original London Sightseeing

Tour **AA**

The last convertible RM-class Routemasters have gone with the transfer of RM313 to Arriva London North, the export of RM398 to Poland, the sale of RM479 to Timebus and RM710 has been scrapped.

Bristol VRT/SL3 BE184 (AET 184T) has also gone to Poland.

30 (NDZ 3150), one of three Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Darts cascaded recently within the Go-Ahead Group, from London General to Brighton & Hove. TERRY S. BLACKMAN



Owen, Sidcup, Kent

Ex-London United Dennis Dart 8.5SDL/Duple Dartline DP21F G503 VYE is in use at Greenwich in all-blue 'Meridian Line Shuttle Bus' livery.

Pennine, Gargrave

Leyland National LN7 (JIL 6502, *OLS 809T*) has been withdrawn and its registration mark passed to LN14 (JTU 599T).

Plymouth Citybus

Ex-Trent Volvo Citybuses G612/4/5/21 OTV have been numbered 179-82.

Powell, Wickersley, South Yorks

Mercedes-Benz/Plaxton Beaver 8 (P2 BUS) has been re-registered P970 OAK.

An acquisition is MCW Metrorider MF151/3/B23F D623 MDB.

Leyland Lynx 45 (F278 AWW) is in fleet livery.

Reading Mainline

I am sorry to record that AEC Routemaster and crew operation will cease this coming summer, ending the largest scale use of half-cabs outside London. Parent company Reading Buses has struck a deal to secure Cardiff's 15 Optare Excels *en bloc*, non-standard there but neatly dovetailing with Reading's numerous examples and they are expected in May/June; earlier plans envisaged Routemasters running until October.

19 February was the last day of operation of the original Line A (Turnham's Farm-Whitley Wood/Shire Hall), as part of a package of service economies. It was replaced by Reading Buses Optare Solos on revised service 1A. This reduced the peak vehicle requirement from 16 to 12 on weekdays and nine on Saturdays (or 11 when football shuttle service 79 runs).

Mike Russell tells me there still were 21 Routemasters owned on 21 January — Nos.11/2/4/8/9, 20/2-6, 30/3-9, 42/3. Of these, No.22 (XYJ 440) has been out of use but is to return to work and Nos.33/4 (ALD 989B, 357 CLT) have been off with engine defects and No.38 (627 DYE) has been off since late-1997. No.34 may return to service.

The February cuts were expected to see the demise of No.30 (ALM 37B) which is earmarked for preservation, No.37 (650 DYE), which is destined for Poland and possibly No.33 — leaving No.43 (ALM 89B) as the last Leyland-engined RM in regular UK passenger service.

No.2 (WLT 993) went to PVS, Carlton (dealer), No.4 (ALM 11B) to Lister, Bolton (dealer), ex-Southend No.7 (VLT 44) to the Castle Point Transport Museum, No.16 (WLT 621) is confirmed sold to Argentina in 1998 and No.17 (859 DYE) went for preservation some time ago.

No.15 (WVS 423, *WLT 999*) is stored for disposal and has not run for a considerable time. Two cannibalised examples likely to be sold are No.21 (CUV 201C), effectively a store shed although partially prepared for service, and No.40 (WLT 848) which was fully repainted but has never been used.

Red Rose, Aylesbury

New Optare MetroRider V108 LVH (likely to be one of the last of this type) is in livery.

Acquisitions are Leyland Tiger/Alexander P B61F D512 CSF from Stagecoach Fife (primarily for school-time departures on routes 16/17) and Volvo B9M/Plaxton Bustler B38F D303 PEV ex-Harris Bus, Grays.

MCW Metrorider F190 YDA has been cannibalised for spares. All-white Optare MetroRider R843 FWW is no longer in use.

Reliance, Sutton-on-Forest

First low-floor bus for this North Yorkshire operator is V293 UUY, a Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300.

Road Car **YT**

New here are Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs Spryte B39F 517-21 (V517-21 XTL). A further five are on order, together with six DAF SB220/East Lancs Myllemium.

L601-5 NOS, the Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians in the Yorkshire Terrier fleet, are to be transferred to Road Car this year. In the meantime, Renault S75/Reeve Burgess Beaver B31F 172 (G872 WML) has been refurbished and transferred from Yorkshire Traction along with H361 TWJ.

Ex-Ribble Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/ECW H43/31F 1367/9/85/9 (TRN 467V etc) are being converted into open-toppers for use at Skegness. Leyland Leopard PSU3F/4R/Duple Dominant IV C49F 1478 (FTL 992X) has been downgraded to B53F.

Withdrawals are of MCW Metroriders 23/7/9-31/9 (D523 SKY etc), Renault S56s 66, 106/8 (D36 NFU, E506 HHN, D308 MHS), Leyland Tiger 427 (KIB 6527), Leyland Atlantean open-toppers 1304/6 (LJA 642/22P), Leopards 1431/2/6 (XSG 71/2R, USF 81S) and Bristol VRT/SL3s 1972/3 (HWJ 922/3W).

108 has passed to J. McParlane, Co Down while 427 is to be rebodied with an East Lancs Myllemium for Strathtay.

Ross, Featherstone

New Mercedes-Benz Vario V967 RCX, like older Vario S277 LGA is branded as 'The Featherstone Rover'.

Seamarks, Luton

Following Dunn-Line's takeover ('News' February), this long-established company has become Dunn-Line (London) Ltd, trading as Seamarks Travel.

Shamrock, Pontypridd

Two former demonstrators, V235 LWU and another, have been acquired; they are the first Solos in South Wales.

New Optare MetroRider/B31F V116/7 LVH are at work at Abercynon in allover white, supplemented by ex-Black Prince, Morley MetroRider/B29F N289 OWY in its former owner's colours.

Rebodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D985 ARE has been reinstated at Abercynon and Blue Bird DP K451 VAY has been transferred there from Newport for local services.

Rare Wadham Stringer-bodied Iveco TurboCity L775 GNM has been withdrawn, Bristol VRT/SL3 VHB 673S has been sold for scrap and Leyland Nationals KJD 542P, THX 191, 213S, VKU 74/5S, AYR 348T, BPL 498T and CWX 657T, Atlanteans TDW 312J and NRG 164M and Mercedes-Benz F427 EMB are all being broken up at Abercynon.

Shearings, Wigan

Van Hool-bodied Volvo 816 sustained major accident damage after leaving an icy Austrian mountain road.

Silcox, Pembroke Dock

A new Berkhof Axial C51Ft-bodied Dennis Javelin has been delivered along with three ex-MoD Wadham Stringer Vanguard II-bodied Javelins which join 29 ex-MoD Plaxton Derwent-bodied Leyland Tigers in the fleet.

Silver Wing, Keynsham

Bristol VRT/SL2 NCD 561M and Leyland Fleetline WDA 961T have been withdrawn.

Skills, Nottingham

Six Setra S315GT-HD coaches, four C49Ft and two to C44Ft layout, are on order for this season.

Setras 10/6 is have been named *Spirit of Spain* and *Spirit of Yorkshire* respectively.

Van Hool-bodied DAF 61 (M736 RCP) has been re-registered JUI 7461 and similar 62/4 (M737/9 RCP) are expected to follow. Volvo 43 now wears University of Derby livery.

SM Travel, Harlow

Ex-Stagecoach South Leyland National JN1 194V is in use on schools services in white with a maroon skirt.

Solent Blue Line

Former Sussex Coastline Leyland National 2/B52F OUF 262W is an unlikely acquisition, some time after disposal of the last of Blue Line's own Nationals. It is in poor condition and has been dumped at Eastleigh with withdrawn vehicles.

Just five Bristol VRT/SL3/ECWs remain in service: ex-Southern Vectis 166-70 (YDL 676T, FDK 678/80/77/9V).

Ex-Ribble VRs 123/49-52/4-7/9-65 (DBV 23W, LHG 449-52/4-7/9T, TRN 160-5V) are confirmed withdrawn; 157/9 passed to Botley & Wheeler, Bishops Cleeve.

Southern Vectis

G516/26 VYE, Dennis Dart 8.5SDL3003/Duple B28F, have been acquired from London United for 'Ryde Runner' service 10 at Ryde.

Reader Keith Bowler tells us that covered top Bristol VR operation has ended. This landmark was celebrated with an enthusiasts' farewell tour around the Isle of Wight on 29 January aboard 1981 VRT/SL3 685 (DPX 685W). Three open-top VRs are expected to operate this coming summer.

Sovereign Bus & Coach **BL**

New 10.7m Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B40F 563-5 (V563-5 JBH) are at work on routes 320/342/361/381.

Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 403/23 (H403/23 FGS) have been withdrawn.

Mercedes 709Ds 903/9/92 (G903/9 UPP, K392 SLB) have gone to First Stop, Renfrew and 905 (G905 UPP) passed to Hulley, Baslow.

Stagecoach Busways **ST**

Dennis Tridents 151-72 are based at Byker and operate exclusively used on cross-city services 39/40 (Chapel House Estate-Walker).

Optare Solo M850/B30F demonstrator T434 FWR has been on loan.

Inter-group transfers have seen Cheltenham & Gloucester take Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH 610/24/50/9 (C610 LFT etc), Cambus/Viscount taking Dennis Dart/Alexander 1704-8/72/4-6 (K704-8 PCN, N772/4-6 RVK), Dart/Plaxton 1754-8/71 (L754-8 VNL, M771 DRG) and Bluebird Buses take Volvo B10Ms 2207-11/3 (N207-11/3 LTN, P118/9 XCN). Olympians 627/31/41/7 (C627 LFT) and Volvo B10M-55 2223 (P123 XCN) have also been withdrawn.

Stagecoach Cambus **ST**

Between now and August, Cambus and Viscount expect to take delivery of 606-26 (P806-26 GMU), Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H49/31F, from East London. They will retain roller destination blind equipment and are to be repainted by United Counties' Bedford workshops before entering service. They will replace ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 481-3, Optare-bodied Olympians 500-2 and Roe-bodied Olympians 503-5, as well as Optare MetroRiders used on now-overcrowded routes. 609-13/21/2 have already been delivered.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B40F 345/6 (L755/6 VNL) have moved from Busways.

Former Park-&-Ride Alexander-bodied Dart 355 has gone into fleet livery.

Two more Peterborough-based Bristol VRT/SL3s laid up and stored at Cambridge are 760/70 (KVF 250V, PWY 49W), while withdrawn 772/3/82/8/9 (SUB 792/3W, VEX 299X, VAH 278/9X) have been sold to Fleetlink, Liverpool (dealer), 796 (KVF 246V) has been withdrawn for disposal at Peterborough. 780/90 (PWY 50W, VAH 280X) are back in use in Cambridge — the last examples there.

Stagecoach Cheltenham & Gloucester Group **ST**

To save space, I have introduced this heading for these commonly managed, commonly numbered companies. No news will be omitted by doing this.

Cheltenham District has Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F 218 (VOD 596S) and Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash B36F 919/21 (N318/20 AMC) from Swindon & District; 218 is in allover dark blue contract livery.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 690 (L690 CDD) has been withdrawn to reserve and Volvo B10M-55s 421/2 (P821/2 FVU) have moved to Swindon & District.

Dodge G13 driver trainer DT9 has transferred from Cheltenham & Gloucester.

Cheltenham & Gloucester has acquired Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Alexander H45/31F 130-2/4 (C610/59/50/24 LFT) ex-Busways.

Dodge G13 driver trainer DT7 (E789 CHS) now carries former Bristol FLF registration 511 OHU (from a Swindon National) and is at Stroud; similar DT9 is with Cheltenham District. Seddon Pennine VII trainer DT6 (XSD 603T) has been withdrawn.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 681 (G681 AAD) has gone to J. Davies, Winchcombe (dealer).

Gloucester Citybus acquired some schools work from Circle Line at the end of January, for which the ex-Busways Olympians have gone to C&G.

Swindon & District's last Bristol VR, 218 (VOD 596S) passed to Cheltenham District, which has sent Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS B49F 421/2 (P821/2 FVU) here.

Leyland National 2 373 (BHY 997V) has been withdrawn to reserve and similar 363 (511 OHU, AAE 647V) has regained its original registration.

Ex-Manchester Leyland Titan 111 (GNF 11V) has gone to Circle Line and Dennis Darts 919/21 (N318/20 AMC) have gone to Cheltenham District.

Seddon Pennine VII driver trainer DT5 (PSG 842P, *803 DYE, MSJ 470P*) has been withdrawn.

Circle Line is to phase out its Brunswick green and white livery and adopt Stagecoach corporate colours.

Leyland National 2 1660 (AAE 660V) has been reinstated and Leyland Titan TNLXB/1RF/Park Royal H47/26F 111 (GNF 11V) has been transferred from Swindon & District.

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Volvo B6 1071 (M71 HHB) has been exchanged with Red & White's 1073 (M73 HHB).

Withdrawals are of lift-equipped Leyland National 1140 (KIB 8140, *THX 249S*), rebuilt Leyland Nationals 307, 1467 and 1754 (SAE 752S; 467 WYA *TAE 645S*; SAE 754S), Leyland National 2s 1651, 1880/933 (AAE 651V, RHG 880X, YSX 933W) and Mercedes-Benz 709D 1680 (G680 AAD). 1680 passed to J. Davies, Winchcombe (dealer) and 1651, 1880 to Wigley, Carlton (dealer). Leyland Atlantean 1482 (TRN 482V) has passed to London Bus Exports, Lydney.

Stagecoach Devon ST

Bayline Iveco 59.12/Mellor Duet 388-90/3 (L318 BOD, L945 EOD, K718 UTT, L949 EOD), originally B26D, have at last been upseated from B26F to B29F. Some added seats were salvaged from withdrawn Ford Transits and are in orange moquette.

Convertible open-top Bristol VRT/SL3 935 (VDV 135S) has gained a pale blue roof to match its bodywork.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 400/12/27/35/8 (F748/28/45 FDV, F404/7 KOD) and VRT/SL3s 932-4 (UWV 605/8/9S) have been withdrawn.

Devon General has withdrawn 709Ds 430/23/43 (F758/60/2 FDV, F413 KOD). Leyland National 791 (BUH 211V) has also been out of action for several months.

Former Southdown National YCD 73T has been acquired as a source of spares to repair accident-damaged 792/3.

Two additional ex-Citybus, Hong Kong Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer DP39F noted in service are 734/7 (N734/7 XDV).

Stagecoach East London/Selkent ST

Over 180 new vehicles were added to these fleets between just October and January — latest deliveries being 10.5m Dennis Trident SFD311/Alexander ALX400 H47/24D TA104/32/5/42-4/7-222 (V104 MEV **except** TA187, 200/22 are V362-4 OWC) and 9.3m Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B27D SLD139/46/50-72 (V139 MVX etc).

For East London, these deliveries have brought the TA class formally on to East London's routes 69, 30, 26 and 86 at Leyton, Stratford, Bow and Romford respectively. Bow is using them on the 26 rather than the 241 as intended, while a restriction is cleared. For similar reasons, Upton Park is operating TAs on routes 115 and 330 rather than the 147.

Upton Park and Stratford are mixing 9.3m and 10.1m Darts on routes 100, 276, 300, 308, 309, 325 and D3. Selkent has all 60 of its TAs and is using TA99-147 on routes 96, 122/177 and 472 from Plumstead and TA148-58 on the 199 from Catford. Bromley's route 194 also has a restriction placed on it, so its 13 TAs went to Plumstead.

The last L-class Leyland Olympians ran at Plumstead on 16 December (L10, 118/33) and L7, 9, 10/2/5/9 (C807 BYY etc), L23/8/9, 68, 81/3, 117/8 (C23 CHM etc), L133/41/4/5 (D133 FYM etc) and L262/3 (D324 YNO, *VLT 14*; D367 JJD, *VLT 9*) have been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer). L262's former Routemaster registration has been transferred on to Trident TA99. Previously-withdrawn L80, 51/7, 60/2/7/9, 73, 105 (C80 CHM etc) have gone to Isle of Man Transport.

East London's Leyland Titan fleet is also nearing its end with just 27 at Bow, Stratford and Leyton in late-January. Those withdrawn during December and January were T261-3/6-8/72 (GYE 261W etc) of which T261-3 were the last in the fleet with bodies part-built by Park Royal, T311/26/34/40/66/94, 428/41/53/66/770/6/92, 514/32 (KYV 311X etc), T579/92/8, 602/10/33/7 (NUW 579Y etc), T847 (A847 SUL) and T1035 (A635 THV). Correcting last month's report, withdrawn T1048 went to Cheltenham & Gloucester and T1099 went to United Counties, not the other way round. T854 (A854 SUL) also went to Cheltenham & Gloucester.

The latest consequence of the massive influx of Tridents is a move to cascade modern single-door double-deckers to other Stagecoach fleets. VN6-26 (P806-26 GMU), Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H43/31F, are moving to Cambus and Viscount over the next few months and VN9-13/21/2 have already departed. Upton Park's Scania N113DRBs, Alexander H47/31F S22-9 (J822-9 HMC) and Northern Counties H47/33F S30/1 (J230/1 XKY) are moving on and S31 had reached East Kent by 5 February.

Darts continue to be cascaded. Alexander Dash B36F-bodied DRL1-8 (N301-8 AMC), Plaxton Pointer B34F-bodied DRL113/5/6/9/20/2/4/35 (K113 SRH etc) and DRL136-8/43/4 (L136 VRH etc), Pointer B40F-bodied PD436 (N436 MBW) and Wright Handibus B35F-bodied DWL24-6 (NDZ 3024-6). DAL1-3/5 and DRL122 to Transit, DAL4/6/7/8 and DRL122 to Fife, DRL113/5/6 and PD436 to East Midland and DRL119/20/35-8/42-6 and DWL24-6 to Western.

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount VP7 (WLT 898, *H657 UWF*) has donated its Routemaster registration mark to Dart SLF SLD100 (S210 WHK).

Stagecoach East Midland ST

More Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts from East London are B40F N436 MBW and B34F 820/2/3 (K113/5/6 SRH). Similar K111/4 SRH are 818/21.

Withdrawn Leyland National 2s 617/8 (GWE 617/8V) have passed to Shamrock, Pontypridd and 620/5 (HWJ 620W, LAG 188V) to MASS, North Anston.

Stagecoach Midland Red ST

Leyland Olympian 901 (TSO 12X) has passed to Burton, Haverhill.

Stagecoach Red & White ST

Further Dennis Javelin 11SDL/Plaxton Premiere Interurban C47F have been tapped from three sources, 960/6 (L153/49 BfV) from Ribble, 962-4 (M102-4 CCD) from Fife and 965/7 (L105/7 SDY) from Manchester.

Recently-acquired Volvo B10M J420 HDS has been re-registered WDA 2T (from an ex-West Midlands Leyland Titan) and is numbered 743, not 741 as expected. It has replaced now withdrawn 742 (WDA 1T, *J424 HDS*) on Traws Cambria services.

A recent acquisition for driver training is Dodge G13/Wadham Stringer B101 ETX.

Optare MetroRider H175 WWT and MCW Metrorider E132 KYW have been on loan at Ross-on-Wye from Bevan, Coleford. Other vehicles appear occasionally on short-term hire at Ross and Chepstow.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 369 is in RailLink livery, replacing Optare MetroRider 257 (L839 MWT) which has been withdrawn along with similar 255 (K520 FYG). They were the last MetroRiders in the fleet. Also withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 179, 201/2 (F609 XMS, H401/2 MRW), and 709Ds 319-21/39 (K319-21 YKG, L339 FWO). 709D 330 (L685 CDD) has gone to Stagecoach Devon. Many withdrawals are an indirect result of severe service cuts in Tredegar and Ebbw Vale.

Volvo B6 1073 (M73 HHB) has been exchanged with Circle Line's 1071 (M71 HHB) .

Mercedes-Benz 811D 184 (F614 XMS) has gone to GHA, Wrexham and Leyland Tiger coach 917 (CYJ 493Y, *XUF 532Y, 2880 CD, 402 DCD*) went to Copeland, Stoke-on-Trent for spares. Happily, Bristol RESL6/ECW 392 (HTG 354N) has gone for preservation locally, one of few REs to wear Stagecoach colours.

Phillipstown depot — for many years the home of Evans Coaches, New Tredegar and one of three depots acquired with Rhondda Buses in 1997 — closed on 10 January .

Stagecoach South Group ST

By 5 February, **East Kent** had taken delivery of 7731 (J231 XKY), a Scania N113DRB/Northern Counties H47/33F, one of 10 N113s rendered surplus at East London.

Bristol VRT/SL3 7448 (LFJ 870W) has gone with ex-Badgerline/CityLine VRs to New York Apple Tours.

Stagecoach Transit ST

Dennis Dart 9.8SDL3054/Alexander Dash B36F 473-6 (N302/3/1/6 AMC) and 9SDL3024/Plaxton Pointer B34F-bodied K124 SRH have arrived from East London; 473-6 are at Hartlepool, enabling Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Falcon 530 (B30 PAJ) to be withdrawn and Leyland Lynxes 607-9 to be returned to Stockton, in turn allowing Dennis Dominators 243/4 to go back to Hull and Dominator/Northern Counties H43/31F 222 (C222 WAJ) to be withdrawn.

Volvo B10M 81 (P111 PRH) has returned to Hull from Darlington, chiefly to cover for accident-damaged B10M 73 (K573 DFS).

Dominator/East Lancs 246 (F146 BKH) and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander 324/5 (F624/5 XMS) have been reinstated at Stockton.

Stagecoach United Counties ST

813 (B99 WUV) is another Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR from Selkent.

Bristol VRT/SL3s 736/44 (LFJ 865/78W) and 941 (URP 941W) have been reinstated, but 735 (LFJ 864W), 944 (URP 944W) and 961/3 (VVV 961/3W) have been withdrawn. In early February, Bedford could still muster VRs 724/36/44, 931/7/9/41/50/62/5/6.

Stagecoach Viscount ST

Just five Bristol VRT/SL3s remained at the end of January, with only three (780/90/6: PWY 50W, VAH 280X, KVF 246V) in active service. 760/79 (KVF 250V, PWY 49W) have been withdrawn and 772/3/82/8/9 (SUB 792/3W, VEX 299X, VAH 278/9X) have been sold.

A shortage of suitable vehicles has led to minibuses and National Express coaches being used on double-deck local services. Also, as a result of the shortage, well-maintained 1966 Bristol Lodekka FLF6G 53 (JAH 553D) has been making welcome forays into passenger service.

Volvo B10M 442 (ACZ 7492) has lost National Express livery in favour of Stagecoach Express branding.

Dodge G13 driver trainer 51 (D443 GAV) has not been on loan to United Counties; together with Cambus trainers 50, 65 and 73, it appears at Northampton for PCV driving tests.

Star Travel, Ossett

Former Arriva Yorkshire Leyland Lynx LX112L10ZR1S/B49F F296 AWW is in stock in dark red.

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

Leyland Olympian coach HJ1 3932 reverted to its original YPJ 502Y on passing to McKindless, Wishaw.

Sullivan Bus, Potters Bar

Ex-London United Dennis Dart 8.5SDL/Duple Dartline DP21F G504 YYE has been acquired and restored to original B28F layout for Watford night routes.

Swanbrook, Cheltenham

Another MCW Metrobus acquired for schools contracts is DR102/22/MCW H43/30F KJW 301W from Stevensons while similar JIL 8201 (*JBO 79W*) has donned Holidays livery.

Leyland Tiger A111 MUD has been re-registered A378 TBW.

Leased Dennis Dart P746 HND has been returned to its owner and replaced by Dart SLF/Marshall B37F T12 SBK.

Leyland Fleetline SDA 566R has been withdrawn, Leyland Atlantean MVK 548R has gone for scrap, but similar MVK 546R is to become a restaurant near Dartmouth.

TM Travel, Old Tupton

Arrivals at this Derbyshire fleet are Leyland National 2 NL116L11/1R/B52F FDV 830V from Sussex Coastline, Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner J657 CYO new to Limebourne and B10M/Plaxton Premiere 350 C50Ft K249 PCV new to Western National.

National 2 EKY 22V now sports Unibus livery. Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin F513 RTL (*F638 UBE*) has been sold.

Tellings-Golden Miller SG

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD B27F V301-9 MDP V301-5 MDP are at work from Byfleet on route H20 (301-5) and from West Drayton on H26 (306-9).

Hired P479/80 MLE, S553 BNV and V270 BNV have been returned.

Thamesdown Transport

Dennis Darts 103/4/9/12/6/28/63/5/86 and Dodges 409/10/3/4 have been fitted with pedal-operated hands-free microphones.

Thorpe, North Wembley

This operator is also supplying 10 vehicles for the Millennium Dome's standby service. Thus in readiness at a secure site in North Greenwich are ex-London United Leyland Nationals LS44, 96/9, 268, 335/7/95 (QJD 884/96/9R, YYE 268T, AYR 335/7T, BYW 395V).

Town & Country, Thurrock

Twenty-eight MCW Metrobuses were acquired from Ensignbus ('News' February) together with routes 324/325/348 and 509. They retain their Ensign fleetnumbers, blue/silver livery and operate from part of Ensign's Purfleet base.

Single-door Metrobuses are: 100 (ORJ 100W), 106/22 (KJW 306/22W), 116 (SND 106X), 117 (UWW 517X) 128/56/61/5/9/72/4 (GOG 138, 256/61/5/9/72, 174W), 134/8 (A634/8 BCN), 144/6 (A144/6 AMO), 147/9 (B147/9 EDP), 158 (FSN 878V), 160 (C780 OCN), 176/8 (ORJ 76/8W), 180/90 (ANA 180/90Y). Dual-door versions are 242-4/70 (BYX 142, 243V, EYE 344V, GYE 570W).

Former Selkent Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH/ECW H43/28D C43, 103 CHM are in stock for Lakeside shuttle services. DAF MB230/Duple C57F E957 GGX is ex-Metrobus, Orpington.

Travel West Midlands NX

K247 HKV, a Volvo B10B-58/Northern Counties Paladin B49F, has been transferred from Travel Dundee.

Leyland Lynxes 1075/7/8 (F75/7/8 DDA) have been sold to Blue Triangle, Rainham.

FLEET FACT

London's L4-263

The withdrawal of Stagecoach Selkent's last ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians is another landmark for a historically significant batch of London double-deckers. Following trials at Stockwell garage with eight buses from three manufacturers, London Buses ordered 260 Gardner-engined Olympians in 1985 to follow the 1,125 Titans and 1,440 Metrobuses bought since 1978. They were much closer to 'provincial' specification than their 2,565 predecessors, but turned out to be noteworthy for two other reasons: theirs was the last big LB order for double-deckers and L263 — completed in January 1987 — was the last bus bodied by Eastern Coach Works. Stagecoach has followed Go-Ahead by removing these 13/14-year-old buses from London ahead of older Titans, but the class isn't disappearing altogether. Arriva, with 158 of the 260, is refurbishing at least some of them and replacing their Hydracyclic gearboxes with Voith units.

Trent Buses

The latest batch of Optare Excels is 199-212 (V199 ERA, V998 DRA, V201-12 ENU); 206-12 replaced smaller Optare Vecta-bodied MANs on service 199 (Buxton-Stockport-Manchester Airport) from 30 January and all except 206 carry 'Skyline' branding.

All 41 Optare MetroRider MR15/B31F, 201-41 (M201/2 URC, N203-21 VRC, N322 WCH, N223-6 VRC, P227-41 CTV) are being sold, 201-21 to Yorkshire Traction and 222-41 to Wilts & Dorset.

Leyland Olympian 718 and Leyland National 481 have returned from Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire to the main Trent Buses fleet, but 718 still wears Blue Apple livery and 481 has been working with Barton fleetnames.

Mercedes-Benz Vario 286 has lost its Ilkeston Flyer branding.

Further DAF SB220/Optare Deltas transferred to Kinchbus are 347/8/50.

Leyland National 479 (VCH 479S) has been withdrawn and sold to Little Bus, Ilkeston.

University of Portsmouth

All-white Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B37F V384 SVV is providing a students-only service between halls of residence and the main city centre campus. It carries University of Portsmouth fleetnames.

Vintage Yellow Buses, Bournemouth

This heritage operator has taken to Willowbrook Warrior-rebodied Leyland Leopards with great enthusiasm. 101/2/4 (RUF 970M, OUF 563W, JNJ 718V) have come from Sussex Bus, along with similar JNJ 269N as a source of spares. Brighton & Hove has provided former driver trainers 103/5-8 (RFC 13T, WPD 27Y, PIB 514S, MUD 27W, RFC 14T).

All are being refurbished (the Brighton quintet losing their dual controls and regaining full sets of seats) and painted in Christchurch Buses blue and cream. Now withdrawn are Leopards 395 (RDA 665R), transferred to Yellow Buses as a back-up driver trainer in yellow livery, 397 (RDA 667R) scrapped by Wigley, Carlton (dealer) and 396/8 (RDA 666R, SOA 678S) awaiting disposal.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Fleetlines 154/6 (ERU 154/60V) are in service, initially in Yellow Buses livery but to carry overall advertising, but 155/7/61 were scrapped, as was 141 (AJT 141T) now withdrawn by Christchurch Buses.

Older Daimler Fleetline 116 (DLJ 116L) has been reinstated from store in Vintage Yellow Buses livery, while 113 (DLJ 113L) is in Christchurch blue; 116 has replaced Fleetline 126 (OEL 126M), due for conversion to a seafront open-topper in Vintage livery after suffering accident damage.

Ex-Cardiff Alexander-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB convertible open-topper 359 (WTG 359T) will operate in London red this coming summer as a promotional vehicle for Lloyds-TSB.

Convertible open-top Daimler Fleetline 187 (CRU 187C) has had its Gardner 6LXB engine (fitted when used by London Transport in 1977 as a DMO-class sightseeing bus) replaced by a less powerful 6LX as originally fitted.

Repairs to Bournemouth 1962 Sunbeam MF2B/Weymann trolleybus 297 are continuing after its roof damage en-route to Usti nad Labem in the Czech Republic last year. A return visit is being considered within the next year.

Wallace Arnold, Leeds

Fifty-one new Plaxton-bodied coaches are on order for this season.

Smart ex-Maidstone 1965 Massey-bodied Leyland Atlantean EKP 234C is still in use at Farthing Corner services on the M2 as a crew bus.

Westward, Wotton-under-Edge, Glos

After a period on loan, Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F TWS 903T is reported acquired, ex-Graham, Bristol.

White Rose, Thorpe, Surrey

Former London Leyland National AYR 304T has been acquired for spare parts from Nash, Weybridge (dealer). Other London Nationals due into stock are BYW 381V from Thames Valley Training and BYW 411/29V from London United.

MCW Metrorider D482 NOX is out of use and similar E803 UDT has been stripped for spares and its remains collected by Wigley, Carlton (dealer).

Wilkinson, Kimberworth Park

AEC Reliance 957 CXV and PBZ 1452 are named *Princess Christine* and *Princess Shirley*; DAF A383 EJS being just *Mabel*.

Wilts & Dorset

N322 WCH, N223-6 VRC and P227-41 CTV, Optare MetroRider MR15/B31F, are being acquired from Trent Buses.

Bristol VRT/SL3 4416 (UDL 673S) has been refurbished and transferred to the **Damory Coaches** fleet. Damory has a new contract for service X18 (Gillingham-Dorchester), so MetroRider 2504 (J504 RPR) is now transferred from Salisbury in exchange for 5116 (F358 URU) which has become 2358 again.

Not previously recorded, Damory 5042 (YAE 513V) was the last Bristol LH in service, worked from Milton Abbas to Dorchester, returning on service 311 to Blandford.

Wootten, Chesham

Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R/Plaxton Paramount 3200 C57F KIW 3768 (BPF 261Y) is in stock from Westways, High Wycombe.

Ikarus Blue Danube-bodied Volvo B10M-60 H607 SWG is the latest to benefit from extensive refurbishment.

Yellow Buses, Bournemouth

A new type of electronic indicator display, Bright Dot, has been fitted to Dennis Dominator 253 and is to be retro-fitted to Dennis Tridents 270-8; apparently it is noticeably brighter and changes in half the time of other units.

Happily, the remaining Leyland Fleetlines are to be retained for new University services 93/94/95. Meanwhile, 163/4 have been on loan to Southern National.

Yorkshire Terrier YT

Eleven DAF SB220GS with East Lancs Myllennium bodies — part of a Traction group order for 24 — were being delivered in February. Their arrival will end mainstream double-deck operation, as only five Metrobuses and two Fleetlines will be retained for school contracts and inter-peak services, so ex-Sheffield Omnibus Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians 1601-5 (L601-5 NOS) are go to Road Car. Terrier is also to get 10 of the 13 ex-Nottingham Volvo B6s acquired from Nottingham.

Leyland National 42 (RKA 885T) and Renault S56 1500 (E413 EPE) (the S56 had not been used since last autumn) have been withdrawn.

Nationals 1 (TCY 735M) — the last of the initial Terrier fleet, 6 (NFN 844M), 22/3 (MBO 22/3P), 40/2 (RKA 881/5T), 43 (VRP 528S), 56 (YCD 86T), 57/8 (MLJ 921/18P), 65 (PJT 263R) and 1818 (JBR 688T) have been sold, 1, 23, 40/2/3, 65 and 1818 going to Wigley, Carlton (dealer).

Yorkshire Traction YT

New deliveries are Volvo B6BLE/East Lancs Spryte B41F 133-44 (V133-44 MAK) and, for National Express work from Barnsley, Mercedes-Benz O.404/Hispano Vita C44Ft 45 (V345 EKW); 133 is at Barnsley and 134-44 went to Rawmarsh.

Seven DAF SB220GS/East Lancs Myllennium are expected here.

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW DPH41/32F 320 (SPY 210X) has come from Arriva Northumbria and is being refurbished for local express services, such as X32 to Leeds. A less conventional acquisition is the front end of Arriva North East ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian B598 SWX, bought as a source of parts.

201-21 (M201/2 URC, N203-21 VRC), Optare MetroRider MR15/B31F, have been acquired from Trent Buses.

Group codes

AA — Arriva Passenger Services
BL — Blazefield Holdings
DG — DelGro
EY — EYMS Group
FG — FirstGroup
GA — Go-Ahead Group
NX — National Express Group
SG — Status Bus & Coach Group
ST — Stagecoach Holdings
YT — Traction Group

Yorkshire Traction's latest East Lancs-bodied Volvo B6BLEs are route-branded for the Rawmarsh Circular services. 139 (V139 MAK) is one of 12 of these 41-seaters.

Trent 208 (V208 ENU), one of the most recent delivery of Optare Excels, at Whaley Bridge. It is one of six branded for the Buxton-Manchester Airport service. JOHN YOUNG



Leyland National 2s 263/4 have been converted for easy access with interior improvements to the same standard as 259. Surprisingly, National 2s 222/36/7/9 have displaced Volvo B6s 120-4 (L81/2/5/6 CNY, M880 ATC) from Huddersfield, their base since acquisition in 1998, to South Yorkshire. National 2 213 (EDT 213V) at work in Barnsley.

MCW Metroliner 99 (HE 8899) and Volvo B10M-55/East Lancs DP 901 (E734 HFW) are being refurbished.

Renault S75s 361/72 (H361 TWJ, G872 WML) have been transferred to Road Car, the latter at least after refurbishment and repainting.

Yorkshire Travel, Dewsbury

Volvo B6 6 (N326 HUA) has left the fleet and has since been on loan to First Manchester.

Leyland National 21 (YPL 383T) has passed to Patterson, Seahouses.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

GUERNSEY

Guernseybus

Optare MetroRider MRO3/B31F 65-68 (40527, 48161, 17314, 56206, J210/4/6/8 BWU) are in service, with 69 (J220 BWU) to follow.

The Volkswagen LT55/Optare CityPacer fleet is shrinking rapidly; 3 has been scrapped, 7/8 have been cannibalised, 1 and 5 are off the road for repair and 9 has been renumbered 8. The only ex-Provincial Iveco in service is 81.

More Bristol LHs have been withdrawn; 64 (31906 and originally 65) has been scrapped, followed by 52 (29729), while 54 (29731) has been delicensed. The last LHS, 58 (14838 and originally 76) is also to be scrapped, but useful Plaxton Elite-bodied LH coaches 157-9/61-71/3/4 remain busy and appear to have a rosier future than newer and less reliable minibuses.

Island Coachways

An interesting event is the construction of new Renault PP180/Leicester Carriage Builders bus 9969. Unfortunately, clearance difficulties have stopped it being used in ordinary service.

An acquisition is ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metroliner MF150/113/B25F 24493 (F671 YOG).

Metroliner 24493 and Volkswagen LT55/Optare CityPacers 6430 (38293), 38290 and 38328 remain in regular service.

Sovereign Coaches' Leyland Swift/Wadham Stringer 8227 is being used regularly on Roadrunner services.

Re-registrations have resulted in Iveco 39138 becoming 8225 and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider 38406 taking over 8228, a mark first used on a Guernsey Motors Albion Victor.

JERSEY

Aurigny Airlines

Former London Leyland National OJD 905R and the final ex-Guernseybus Bristol LH, 5597, have been scrapped.

Jerseybus

Experimental battery electric minibuses have gone on to a new Town Hoppa service in St Helier — with about as much success as in mainland Britain.

Jersey Electricity has acquired the Southern Electric Optare MetroRider MREL/B18F, L801-4 HJO, used latterly by Stagecoach Oxford, using L802/1/4 HJO as E1-3 — E3 has been re-registered J 13786 — with L803 HJO left aside. They are in a silver livery with grey skirt.

Local reports say they have only been used sporadically, with operational problems leading to frequent use of diesel MetroRiders instead. Indeed, the cheap 20p fare has generated loadings that make the diesels' 43-passenger capacity more useful than the heavy battery buses' 18 seats and no standees.

Dennis Dart 11 (J 13853) has gained a full-depth electronic indicator display.

Overall advertisements feature strongly. Reader Roy Humphrey details those current as:

MetroRiders: 3 (Top Personnel), 28 (PBS), 45 (Rowlands Recruitment).

Darts: 4 (Top Personnel), 6 (The Living Legend), 7 (Bavaria Lager), 8 (Co-Operative), 10/6 (Steeple Finance), 11 (Ultimate Business Systems), 12 (Funland Amusements), 22 (Jersey Evening Post), 27 (Royal Scot), 44 (Tailor Made), 49 (Jersey Road Safety), 66 (AA Appointments), 67 (Emerande Ferries), 68 (Coca-Cola)

Ford R1014: 31 (Jersey Pearl), 61 (Park Personnel).

Pioneer Coaches

A new delivery is Cannon/Leicester Carriage Builders Islander C43F 3 (J 491) — an unusual allocation of a cherished three-digit registration, in memory of the late David Binnington, whose car previously carried this.

A further three Leyland Swift/Wadham Stringer Vanguard acquired from Harrogate & District are G113 YMM and F172/3 SMT, while similar Swifts 1/3 (J 89654, 19732, G111/2 UMM) have entered service; 3 was subsequently renumbered 2. Former Harris, Grays Swifts E308/9 HPU have been re-registered and numbered 27/8 (J 10642, 7539).

Ex-Ribble Optare MetroRider B25F J176 MCW is in traffic as 26 (J 14097).

Duple-bodied Bedford SB5s J 73020, 14618 and 11647 have been withdrawn, but are stored for possible future use.

Wadham Stringer-bodied Bedford SB 7 (J 14670) has passed to De La Salle College and wears a white/blue livery, replacing former Blue Coach Tours SB/Duple J 3159.



Puddle Ducks

The three blue/light yellow locally-built amphibious vehicles used on the Castle Ferries service from the Grand Hotel across to Elizabeth Castle are J 18380 named *Valiant* and *Lizzie*, J 42159 named *Victory* and *Walter* and J 45360 named *Vanguard* and *Charles*.

Tantivy Blue Coach Tours

Latest addition here is Leyland Swift/Wadham Stringer C41F 62 (J 2069, F66 SMC).

J 89771 is confirmed as numbered 63 and a rash of re-registrations has changed 38 (J 40679) to J 88633, 40 (J 42753) to J 66475, 41 (J 42607) to J 24651, 49/50 (J 64339/40) to J 16762, 88042.

Duple-bodied Bedford SB3 53 (J 29226) was twice despatched to Kosovo last year, minus seats and filled with humanitarian supplies; it was labelled 'Coach to Kosovo' and 'With love from the people of Jersey'.

A major thinning of Duple Dominant-bodied SBs has seen 68-70/2-6 (J 62566, 62616/8, 43189, 58925/34/31/27) sold for scrap; 56/9, 62 (J 86101, 20049, 52603) will follow. 57 (J 20051) has passed to a local buyer for conversion to a racing quad-car transporter.

ISLE OF MAN

Isle of Man Transport

Following demonstration, six Dennis Tritents with East Lancs Lolyne bodywork are on order.

Meanwhile, double-deck stock is being enhanced by the acquisition of Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH/ECW H42/26D 3-13, 44 (EMN 203-13, MAN 44U), better known hitherto as Stagecoach Selkent L80, 51/7, 60/2/7/9, 73 and 105 (C80 CHM etc). These wear the latest Eastbourne-pattern red/cream livery and were converted to single-door before delivery.

There will be few tears at the disposal of unwanted 9m Dennis Darts 3-13, 71 (CMN 103-8L, CMN 9-13H, CMN 71P) in part-exchange to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer). 3/5-13 have passed to Metrobus, Orpington. Dennis Dominators 49-53 (CMN 49-53T) have also been withdrawn.

Further good news is that the heritage fleet is expected to see fuller use this summer.

Even Jersey's 7ft 6in-wide Bedford SBs cannot live for ever. Tantivy Tours' Duple-bodied 59 (J 20049), seen at Jersey Airport last May, is scheduled for early disposal. TONY WILSON

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THE LONDON BUS SCENE

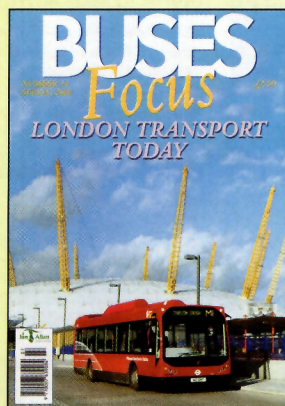
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Scottish reports should be sent, please, to **Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** or by e-mail to: **sandybus@aol.com** to reach him by **18 April** for the **June** issue.

Abbott, Loanhead

Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-61 C346 LVV was re-registered 821 FTA in December.

Allander, Milngavie

Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 AT37 (D468 EKS, *GJI 627, D812 OSJ, GIL 1685, D566 MVR*) was acquired in January ex-Marbill, Beith. Alexander-bodied Ailsas LHS 748/7V and ECS 57V have been numbered AT29, 35/6 respectively; Van Hool-bodied Volvo GIL 1685 is AT30; and Toyota Coaster H7 TCC is AT34.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 AT13 (N813 NHS) was re-registered 4143 AT in January but the new mark for similar Van Hool-bodied AT08 (4143 AT, *L718 ADS, KSK 983*) is not yet known.

Allison, Dunfermline

H154 MOB is the first of another four Carlyle Dartline B28F-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDLs which have been purchased from London United; it was numbered DT154 by the latter. Similar H71/9, 151 MOB and H162 NON have all been repainted into red and yellow fleet livery.

PMT C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D E911 AFM has been converted to B24F.

Wright NimBus B28F-bodied Renault S75s HDZ 5461/74 have been sold to Compass Travel, Stockton-on-Tees, while similar NDZ 7927/8/30 passed to Wilson, Carnwath in January.

Anderson, Langholm

112 VMY (*LME 413P*) is a 1976 Plaxton C45F-bodied AEC Reliance acquired last year ex-Horn, East Finchley.

Arriva Scotland West AA

Another three Ford Tourneo people movers have been added to the fleet as MPV2-4 (V63-5 ERG); all four of these vehicles are allocated to Johnstone depot. The third Plaxton Pointer 2 B39F-bodied Dennis Dart SLF new in December is 800 (V313 NGD) which was also allocated to Johnstone at that time.

MCW H43/28D-bodied MCW Metrobus DR101/17 960 (A998 SYF) and similar DR101/9 961 (BYX 200V) were added to the fleet in December ex-Arriva London 998, 200; 960 entered service from Barrhead depot in Arriva London red, while 961 is allocated to Greenock depot. B31F Optare MetroRiders 190-2/6 (P56-8 XTN, P896 XCU) arrived in January ex-Arriva Northumbria 897-9/6 and similar 188/9 (K728/9 HUG) arrived in February ex-Arriva Cymru 928/9. All six are in corporate livery and have been allocated to Inchinnan depot.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR 908 (WDS 220V, *HSD 83V*); similar Northern Counties-bodied 909 (XRR 50S); and Park Royal-bodied Leyland Titan TLNXXB2RRs 910 (CUL 143V), 913 (WYV 60T) left the fleet in November.

Austin, Earlston

Bova FHD12-290 G820 YJF (*TFJ 694, G820 YJF*) was re-registered UGE 471 last July.

Bulldog, Whitburn

Carlyle DP25F-bodied Iveco 49.10 G358 FOP was acquired last year ex-City Sprinter, Renfrew together with similar Reeve Burgess B25F-bodied G915 KWF ex-Stepend, Glenmavis.

Cityliner, Port Glasgow

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62s M232 LYT and N286 OYE were re-registered BLZ 5434 and ALZ 8697 respectively in January, but the new marks for Plaxton-bodied B10M-60s ALZ 8679 (*G389 PNV*) and BLZ 5434 (*G454 VSL*) are not yet known.

City Sprinter, Renfrew

Reeve Burgess Beaver DP25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds F736 FDV and F410 KOD were acquired in February ex-Stagecoach Bayline 419/40. Carlyle-bodied Iveco 49-10 G358 FOP was sold to Bulldog, Whitburn last year.

Clan (Skye-Ways), Kyle

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 612D R741 EGD was acquired in February ex-Clyde Coast, Ardrossan. Bova FHD12-330 12 EWO passed to Silver Fox, Renfrew in January although the registration has been returned to this company for future use.

Clyde Coast, Ardrossan

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-61 GIL 5407 (*D555 MVR*) was sold to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow last year and Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz 612D R741 EGD went to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in January. They subsequently passed to White Star, Neilston and Clan, Kyle respectively.

Coakley, Motherwell

V999 CBC is a Mellor B33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D new in December and V20 CBC is a similar Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied vehicle new in January. Mellor-bodied O.814D V90 CBC is also B33F while Plaxton-bodied V10 CBC and Marshall-bodied V600 CBC are both B31F. Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts V400, 700 CBC are B37F.

Collison, Stonehouse

Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D V829 GGA was new in January while Jonckheere C51Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 W1 BUS was due to enter service in March. Other recent additions comprise East Lancs H47/37F-bodied Scania N113DRBs H809/11 WKH ex-Stagecoach Transit (Kingston Upon Hull) 809/11; Caetano Optimo C26F-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50R S676 YOX ex-Wilson, Strathaven; and Plaxton Cheetah C32F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D T810 TSC returned by Mitchell, Pleat.

Mellor B20FL-bodied Iveco 59.12 N874 BTS and Alexander H49/37F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R EJ11 114W were sold to Wilson, Strathaven in January, while Plaxton B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D V828 GGA passed to Mitchell, Pleat at that time.

Dart, Paisley

Following the inspection of a Scania L94/Wright single-decker and a Scania N113CRB/East Lancs Cityzen double-decker, two of the double-deckers have been bought in part exchange for two Marshall-bodied MAN single-deckers to provide additional capacity on commuter express services. They are the first new double-deckers for a Paisley independent since 1979.

Recent additions to the fleet comprise LHE Commuter B33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D M66 (H130 CDB) ex-Arriva North West 100; UVG CitiStar B29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M67 (N950 MGG) ex-Weir, Clydebank; Wadham Stringer B33F-bodied 811D M68 (M275 FNS, *IIB 1618, M275 FNS*) ex-Coakley, Motherwell; and Wadham Stringer-bodied Dodge driver trainer T11 (E232 WOK) ex-MacLennan, Laxay.

Plaxton C53F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2Rs C1 (VJI 6961, *ONL 953X, LFT 1X*) C2, 3 (VJI 6962/3, *LFT 3, 4X*) have been sold to North East Bus Breakers (dealer), Annfield Plain.

Mercedes-Benz minibuses M58-60 now carry nearside route branding for Glasgow-Torrance services 71/72.

The long-established Strathclyde Passenger Transport-registered local services between the Blindcraft factory in Springburn and Castlemilk/Knightswood ceased on 11 February, after which these facilities continued on a contract hire basis for Glasgow City Council, owner of the factory.

Davidson, Bathgate

V898, 944 DNB are Dennis Darts with Plaxton Pointer B29F bodywork added to this fleet recently. S740 RNE is a Mercedes-Benz Vario which has been on loan from Mistral (dealer), Knutsford.

From 28 February services D83 (Fauldhouse-Livingston) and D89 (Livingston-Bathgate) were replaced by a new hourly, Monday to Saturday D89 running between Fauldhouse, Livingston, Bathgate and Armadale. The contract for services between Livingston bus station and Kirkton Campus has been surrendered.

Dickson, Paisley

Alexander B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D446 UHC was acquired last October ex-Arriva Cymru MMM46.

Docherty, Irvine

Alexander-bodied Ailsa B55-10s WTS 274/5T were sold to Irvine, Law in January.

Dodds, Ayr

Caetano Algarve II C51Ft-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA N591 GBW passed to Dawsonrentals (dealer), Miln Kynes in December.

Doig, Glasgow

Plaxton C57F-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA M785 NBA was used by this operator last June and July ex-Bullock, Cheadle. Alexander H44/35F-bodied Ailsa B55-10 USD 718S, originally owned by A1 Service member Brown, Dregghorn, was purchased in November.

Edinburgh Airport

Northern Counties B30D-bodied DAF SB220GS R972 FNW arrived about a year ago ex-AirLinks 972.

Eve Cars & Coaches, Dunbar

The East Lothian Council contract to operate the Rural Transport Grant-funded Gaberlunzie bus service ('Scottish Column', November 1998) passed from First Edinburgh to this firm from 17 January. V5 EVE, a low-floor Optare Solo in green livery with blue skirt and red Gaberlunzie fleetnames, has been bought for this contract.

Van Hool C48Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-60 K514 KWT (*8980 WA, K806 HUM*) was acquired last August ex-Q Drive, London. Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D GSU 370 was re-registered F942 YSX last year.

Ferguson, Cleland

From 14 February, the Wishaw-Cleland service was revised to provide a Cleland-Wishaw-Motherwell-Newarthill circular facility.

First Aberdeen FG

The latest demonstrator to visit this fleet was Alexander ALX200 B40F-bodied Dennis Super Dart V928 FMS, which arrived on 31 January and was allocated the usual demonstrator fleetnumber 028. Its electronic displays were not programmed and it was relegated to use on service 10 because windscreen boards are normally used on that service anyway. After very little use, however, it left the fleet on 7 February.

Leyland Olympian 110 has been repainted back into fleet livery in lieu of its Northsound Radio overall advertisement.

Further to the February issue, Toyota Coaster 045 (542 GRT) was originally registered K67 HSA and not K67 HAS.

Service changes from 20 February included the revision of 1 (Garthdee/Auchinelly-Dubford), 2 (Garthdee/Auchinelly-Ashwood) and 3 (Garthdee/Auchinelly-Lee Crescent) to run as 1-3 (Garthdee/Auchinelly-Dubford/Ashwood); and the extension of Monday to Saturday daytime 19 (Culter-Bon Accord Centre) to Tillydrone to replace 26 (Tillydrone-Holburn Junction) at these times; 26 still operates between Tillydrone and Duthie Park in the evenings and on Sundays. 18/19 (Culter-Dyce) now runs as 18 in both directions in the evenings and on Sundays; this service continues to run Culter-Airhall during Monday to Saturday daytime.

V5 EVE, the Optare Solo which Eve of Dunbar has bought to take over East Lothian's Gaberlunzie service.
TONY WILSON



LOTHIAN BUSES CORE SERVICES

In the biggest change to the company's services since deregulation, Lothian Buses started its revised network, as foreshadowed last month, on 12 March. The route or frequency of more than half of the services operated changed on that date, creating a core network that runs seven days per week, every 10 minutes during the day on Mondays to Saturdays and at least every 30 minutes at other times.

Sections of route forming this network comprise 3 (Wester Hailes-Mayfield), 8 (between Pilton and Moredun), 12 (Leith Links-Gyle Centre), 21 (Gyle Centre-Victoria Quay), 23 (Trinity-Morningside), 25 (Sighthill-Newhaven or Holyrood), 26 (between Clerwood and Eastfield), 31 (East Craigs-Ferniehill) and 33 (Ferniehill-Baberton).

A notable feature of the changes is the provision of more attractive services to the growth areas of the city, including more frequent links between the city centre, Gyle Centre and Edinburgh Park, some using the more direct Western Approach Road for the first time; a new 12-minute service between Princes Street and Holyrood, serving the Scottish Parliament site, *Evening News* building and Dynamic Earth exhibition; a direct new service between the city centre and the Scottish Executive offices at Victoria Quay, using the Greenways on Leith Walk; and a direct service between Princes Street and the new Fountainpark leisure complex.

ABERDEEN BUS SERVICE INVESTIGATION

Aberdeen City Council is to carry out an investigation into the city's bus market, after a city councillor put forward complaints from his Kincorth constituents that bus services were disintegrating despite the council's investment in infrastructure.

The environment & infrastructure committee will look at the relationship which exists between the council and its quality partnership partners, First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird. It will try to determine whether the large amount of public money being invested in bus priority measures is being matched by bus operator investment. The inquiry will also look at the competitive relationship between First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird.

At present, First Aberdeen has a near-monopoly in Aberdeen with competition from Stagecoach Bluebird primarily on one cross-city route. The operators will, however, be able to point out that competition has spread to other routes recently such as to Woodend, and that fares initiatives have just been introduced by

both firms. Real competition lasted only briefly in the Aberdeen area in the late-1980s; other than Stagecoach Bluebird's Northfield-Torry route and a continuing First Aberdeen presence in Aberdeenshire through tendered services run by its Kirkpatrick subsidiary, it effectively ended in 1991 when Stagecoach purchased Bluebird.

It is rare for a local authority to hold this type of inquiry, since some of the issues involved are normally the province of the Office of Fair Trading.

NEW OWNER FOR CITYLINK AGAIN

With Metroline agreeing in February to the £74 million takeover by the Far East-based transport group DelGro (see 'News', page 6), Scottish Citylink once again is heading for a change of ownership.

If accepted by shareholders, this new deal will result in DelGro taking control of Metroline's long-distance Scottish Citylink coach services in Scotland, making it the fifth owner of Citylink in the past decade. It will also presumably include the shareholdings owned by Citylink in both the West Coast Motors and Skye-Ways businesses.



Citylink currently faces cut-price competition on the Edinburgh-Glasgow corridor from M8 Motorvator, a joint venture between Lanarkshire independents Long, Salsburgh and Bruce, Shotts. Both operators use Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10Ms; this is one of Long's. MURDOCH CURRIE

Traditionally, when customer levels have dropped, service frequencies have been reduced. Patronage has decreased recently on service 23 (Heathryfold-Summerhill) but, as an experiment, frequencies are to be increased to every 10 minutes rather than 15 during Monday to Saturday daytime, and every 20 minutes rather than 30 at other times. The normal approach is, however, being applied to the Park-&-Ride service to Calder Park where the company has revealed that during the past two years average patronage has been less than one passenger per journey, and the frequency is now being reduced from 10 to 15 minutes

First Edinburgh FG

MCW H43/28D-bodied MCW Metrobus DR101/12s GYE 397, 497W, previously First CentreWest M397, 497, were acquired last August for spares.

When Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts 240/1 (S240/1 CSF) went for their first annual test around last October, it was found that the documentation did not match the vehicles. As a result, they have been re-registered S241/0 CSF respectively.

Further vehicles reported in First Edinburgh livery comprise Mercedes-Benz O.405 65; Leyland Tiger 152; MCW Metrobus 896; Ailsas 1058/85; Volvo Citybus 1189; and Volvo B10B 1203. To correct a previous report, Leyland Olympian 917 and Volvo Citybus 1171 are *not* in these colours but remain in SMT livery. More vehicles have appeared in the 'Barbie'-style First Edinburgh colours, including Leyland Tigers 151, 328/45 (the latter previously in SMT Coaches livery); Mercedes-Benz 811D 695; MCW Metrobus 821; Leyland Olympian 959; Ailsas 1053/92; and Optare MetroRiders 1525/34. Ailsa 1054 is also confirmed as being in this livery.

Roe Doyen-bodied Leyland Royal Tiger B50 370 (PSU 320, A562 BSX) was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall around October. Wright Axxess Fioline-bodied Scania L94UB 6 (V136 ESC) was transferred to First Leeds in December. Other vehicles which had left the fleet by the end of last year comprised Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU5D/4R 468 (? , H5U 273, OUF 51W, 411 DCD, LPN 357W); Van Hool-bodied DAF MB230s 2110 (K535 RJX), 2311/4 (L521/36 EHD), 2313/7/8 (M803-5 RCP); unusual Smit Eroliner-bodied DAF SB2300 2309 (KSU 389, B88 KSF); Van Hool-

bodied DAF SB3000s 2312 (R92 GNW), 2316 (R93 GNW, 98 KK 2104, R93 GNW); and EOS 180Z integrals 2501/2 (R81/2 GNW), 2509 (N49 FWU). The East Lothian Council contract to provide the Gaberlunzie bus service passed to Eve, Dunbar on 17 January. Apart from operating school and college runs, this company has stopped competing with Buskers, Galashiels on service 20 (Hawick-Kelso via Denholm and Jedburgh). Service C5 (Restalrig-Wester Hailes), Edinburgh's first cross-city minibus route when introduced by Eastern Scottish in 1986, was withdrawn at the end of January.

The FirstValue off-peak day return fare of £1.40 introduced by all three FirstGroup Scottish companies (see 'News' last month) offers very long bargain-priced trips with First Edinburgh, such as Edinburgh-Hawick.

The timetable put on display recently at platform D1 of St Andrew Square Bus Station for services to East Lothian (typically operated by low-floor Dennis Darts) shows a picture of Scottish Omnibuses B1 (WSF 201), a 1961 AEC Reliance with Burlingham coachwork about to depart for Prestwick Airport!

First Glasgow FG

New Wright Axxess Fioline B40F-bodied Scania L94UB SS121 (V221 GLS) entered service from Parkhead depot in January in corporate livery. The previous SS121 (V122 FSF) was renumbered SS122 at that time.

Cumbernauld-based MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus DM168 (G390 OGD) reverted to its original MB52 fleetnumber in December.

Plaxton Premiere 320 C55F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s CV9, 10 (P770/1 XHS) were sold to First BeeLine in January.

Service changes from 5 March included conversion of Overground routes 9 (Drumchapel-Linwood) and 40 (Easterhouse-Clydebank) to 24-hour operation; 61 (Summerston-Sandyhills) increased to seven buses per hour with some journeys operated by articulated vehicles; and alternate journeys on 119 (Baljaffray-City Centre) diverted via Kessington.

First Stop, Renfrew

G903/9 UPP and K392 SLB, Mercedes-Benz 709Ds with B23F bodywork by Reeve Burgess and Plaxton (K392 SLB), were acquired towards the end of last year ex-Sovereign Bus & Coach 903/9/92.

Fisher, Aberfeldy

Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D V490 FSF was new in January. It displaced the former MoD Wadham Stringer-bodied Dodge G13 B180 YSL which was sold at auction.

Galloway, Harthill

Alexander T-type DP49F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3G/4R NFS 172Y has been acquired from Docherty, Irvine for use on service 150 (Boghall-Bathgate-Eastfield).

Gibson, Renfrew

Alexander (Belfast) B23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N587 WND was acquired in November ex-Irvine, Law.

Glasgow Citybus

Further to the February issue, Dennis Dart H153 MOB rather than H153 NON is owned.

Goosecroft, Denny

Alexander B21F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D129 NUS was sold to Ramm (dealer), Sudden in January.

Grangeburn, Motherwell

Alexander H49/37F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R SCN 285S has been acquired ex-Wilson, Carnwath.

HAD Coaches, Shotts

Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D V993 DNB was new last October.

Hall, Kennoway

Zodiac M16-bodied Ford Transit NBZ 2883 (*E315 CHK*) was acquired in February ex-Newton, Walcote.

Harvey, Port Glasgow

Carlyle B33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D G174 YRE was acquired in January ex-Arriva North East 965.

Highland Country RN

ECW H43/31F-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB FAO 426V has been acquired ex-Stagecoach Cumberland 426, and is now in the two-tone blue livery. Other recent repaints into these colours include Leyland Leopards 144/50; Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 037/8/49; and Optare MetroRider 048.

Horsburgh, Pumphreston

West Lothian Council service 413 (Livingston-Kirkton Campus) is now operated by this firm together with West Lothian/Edinburgh City Council service 424 (Livingston-Balerno-Currie).

Hutchison, Overtown

Duple-bodied Volvo B10M-61 KSK 932 (*E153 XHS*) passed to Dunn-Line, Nottingham last May.

Irvine, Law

Alexander H44/31D-bodied Ailsa B55-10s WTS 274/5T were acquired from Docherty, Irvine in December and January respectively. Roe H43/34F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R DSD 55V was also purchased in January from another former A1 Service member Steele, Stevenston.

Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N587 WND passed to Gibson, Renfrew in November.

Kennedy, Blantyre

The Hamilton-Cambuslang and Blantyre-Parkhead services were cancelled from 15 January.

Key, Johnstone

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D F313 EJO had been re-registered RIL 3749 and given fleetnumber M49 by January.

King, Kirkcowan

Ford R1014s CBM 300T and RIB 5090 (JBH 391V), with Duple C35F and C33F bodywork respectively, were acquired in January ex-Mayne, Buckie.

Kinnaird, Tranent

Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D G85 SKR was purchased in February ex-Arriva East Herts & Essex 2285.

Lafferty, Glenboig

M16-bodied LDV Convoy V243 FGG was new in September.

Liddell, Auchinleck

M14-bodied Ford Transit G68 SYS was acquired about a year ago ex-Glasgow City Council (non-psv) 22726.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Hutchison's Coaches (Overtown) Ltd.
BASED:	Castlehill Road, Overtown, North Lanarkshire.
FOUNDED:	Started by Isaac Hutchison around 1920, who later joined the Lanarkshire Bus Owners' A1 Association and ran on its Newmains-Glasgow route. He also developed local bus routes and undertook contract work for the many coal mines then in the area. After his death in 1960, the company was acquired by a partnership of former PSV dealer Millburn Motors and road haulage contractor Sam Anderson (Newhouse) Ltd. Two years later, full control passed to Anderson's and has remained there since, although there was a perplexing period from 1967 to 1970 when three senior Scottish Bus Group directors were on the board.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Cleland/Newmains-Glasgow express services, Motherwell, Wishaw, Hamilton, Larkhall area local bus services (some operated since the 1920s), private hires, contract work and tours throughout Britain and continental Europe. All bus operations are unsubsidised at present.
LIVERY:	The traditional blue and cream colours have been retained for buses. Most coaches are now silver with red/blue bands and 'Scottish Pullman' fleetnames but six are in David Urquhart Travel or Caledonian Travel contract liveries.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	Operator licence allows for 44 vehicles — currently 26 buses and 19 coaches are owned. The bus fleet includes eight Optare Vectas and seven Optare Excels with two more Excels due. In addition to the usual Volvos with Plaxton or Van Hool bodywork, the coach fleet contains two Marcopolo Explorer 2-bodied Dennis Javelins and a Berkhof Axial-bodied Volvo.
MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLE?:	G456 MGG, a 1990 Duple Dartline-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDL and KSK 930, a 1996 Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 equipped with a side lift and space for three wheelchairs suitable for hires by elderly groups, stroke clubs etc.



Left:

Arguably the most unusual vehicle in Hutchison's current fleet is this Dennis Dart with Dartline body built by Duple before production moved to Carlyle.

SANDY MACDONALD

Above:

Typical of the older buses in Hutchison's fleet is this Duple 300-bodied Volvo B10M on service in Wishaw. Hutchison changed to mid-engined Volvos after the AEC Reliance — standard vehicle for almost 20 years — ceased to be available.

ALAN MILLAR

Lothian

Plaxton H49/26D-bodied Dennis Trident 538 (V538 ESC) entered service at Marine Garage in mid-January, completing the batch. Marine-based Tridents have been given route branding for service 26 (Clerwood-Eastfield/Seton Sands) — lettering is white on a red background underneath the top deck windows, unlike the vehicles on service 44 which have route branding in white on a black background.

Repainting of the former Airline-liveried Leyland Olympians 366-71 into madder and white fleet colours began in January, with 366 being the first to emerge from the paintshop.

In addition to Alexander H47/28D-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1R 667 (GSC 667X), many examples of the ECW H50/31D-bodied Olympian ONTL11/2Rs commencing at 668 (OFS 668Y) have been withdrawn. It is understood that other vehicles withdrawn for disposal include open-top Leyland Atlanteans 20-2/4/5 (GSC 660-2/4/5X); Duple Laser 2 C53F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RHs 61/2 (B61/2 GSC), 63/4 (C63/4 PSG); similar Duple 340 C55F-bodied 65/6 (D65/6 BSC); Plaxton Paramount 3500 III C53F-bodied Tiger TRCL10/3ARZAs 67/8 (G67/8 DFS); and Caetano Optimo II C21F-bodied Toyota Coaster HDB30R 70 (L70 LRT).

More new owners for Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlanteans sold during the past year comprise Collinson, Longridge (636); Guide Friday, Stratford (23, 39, 41/3-5, 447/8, 583, 942); Mason, Bo'ness (646); Scott, Nottingham (640, for preservation); W. G. Thomas, Porth (638/43/57); and Yorkbus, York (623).

New service 58/58A (Gyle Shopping Centre-Churchill) started on 10 January in partnership with Napier University. This half-hourly service connects all of the university's sites at Sighthill, Craiglockhart, Craighouse, Redwood and Canaan Lane, and is provided by Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Darts with appropriate signs for the link.

In retaliation against the introduction of First Edinburgh's £1.40 off-peak return fares, the company has introduced a Bargain Day Ticket (£1.40 adult, 70p child), available after 09.30 on weekdays and all-day at weekends. Most vehicles in the fleet carry orange stickers in the front and side windows publicising this offer, which is cheaper than the cost of parking a car for an hour in parts of the city centre.

McColl, Balloch

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlanteans ANA 537/50/3Y had left this fleet by last August. Half-hourly Monday to Saturday service D4 (Balloch-Dumbarton) was started on 2 February.

MacDonald, Cumbernauld

Caetano Algarve C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 DBZ 5358 (*HUI 565, B727 MBC*) was sold to Volvo Coach Sales (dealer), Loughborough last July.

MacIver, Newton Mearns

Alexander B25F-bodied Dodge S56 E324 WYS passed to McMillan, Thornliebank in January.

McKindless, Wishaw

More Carlyle Dartline B28F-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDLs arrived in February; H880 LOX (*236 CLT, H880 LOX*), H82 MOB and H160 NON were previously London United DT80/2,160.

Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger C110 JCS (*HSV 760, C110 JCS*) was re-registered OJI 9453 in February, as MCW-bodied MCW Metroliner DR130/4 OJI 9453 (*A146 BSC*) is now out of use.

MacLeod, Rogart

From 24 January this operator has provided a Monday, Wednesday and Friday service between Lairg or Rogart and Helmsdale.

McNairn, Coatbridge

Dormobile B29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D J609 KGB was sold to Holloway (dealer), Willenhall towards the end of last year. A new Monday to Friday service between Monklands Hospital and Caldercruix was started on 21 February.

MacPhail, Newarthill

Van Hool C46Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P309 VVR was purchased in November ex-Wallace Arnold, Leeds.

McQueen, Garelochhead

Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D V505 SFS was new in January. Three older Mercedes-Benz vehicles have been sold recently comprising Marshall B31F-bodied 811D P200 BUS, Plaxton C33F-bodied 814D P656 MSC, and Adamson C24F-bodied 609D P993 TGB. The latter two passed to Renton, Kirknewton and Hill, Lyness respectively in February.

April 2000

McTaggart, Greenock

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P31 KWA passed to Kirkby (dealer), Anston in November.

Mackie, Alloa

Plaxton C43F-bodied Volvo B10M-46 G145 BLD passed to Fisher, Aberfeldy in January.

Marbill, Beith

Plaxton Derwent B55F-bodied Volvo B10M-55s H149-59 SKU were acquired in January ex-Travel Your Bus 149-59 and will no doubt be re-seated to a higher capacity in due course, like those purchased last year.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M481 CSD was re-registered GJI 627 in December.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 D468 EKS (*GJI 627, D812 OSJ, GIL 1685, D566 MVR*) was sold to Allander, Milngavie in January.

Marshall, Baillieston

Re-registrations in December involved Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D 7617 SM (*F542 ALS, WSU 223, 436 VVT, F977 APW*), now WIW 3628; Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 WIW 3628 (*G82 BLD*), again G82 BLD; and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 K827 HUM, now 7617 SM. The first two were subsequently sold to Henderson, Glenrothes and Snaith, Otterburn respectively.

Mathieson, Inverness

Ford Transit F776 XSX was sold to Ramm (dealer), Sudden in January.

Mayne, Buckie

Duple-bodied Ford R1014s CBM 300T and RIB 5090 (*JBH 391V*) passed to King, Kirkcowan in January.

Midland, Auchterarder

Perth & Kinross Council-subsidised services between Perth, Auchterarder and Stirling were revised from 14 February. Service 19 (Blackford-Perth) now operates mainly hourly on Mondays to Saturdays and some journeys have been re-routed via Findo Gask, Kinkell Bridge and Perth Royal Infirmary. 166 (Dunning-Stirling) has been withdrawn and replaced by a new service 20 between the same points but by a different route between Dunning and Auchterarder. Some early evening journeys on this service also run via Braco.

Milligan, Mauchline

Jonckheere C49/7Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61 DLS 545Y (*570 PRR, 711 GRM, JBM 20Y*) was purchased in January ex-Prentice, West Calder. Duple C53F-bodied Volvo B58-56 EAV 809V moved in the opposite direction at that time.

Millport Motors, Millport

Further to last month's issue Leyland National GGE 173T is now licensed ready for use.

Mitchell, Plean

Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D V828 GGA was purchased from Collison, Stonehouse in January. Reeve Burgess-bodied Leyland Swift UBM 880 (F36 TMP) was re-registered A2 YOU in January.

Moffat & Williamson, Gauldry

V117 ESL is the second of the Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814Ds recently delivered. Infrequent, Monday to Saturday service 65 (Newburgh-Kettlebridge) was started on 10 January.

Morrison, Stirling

Optare StarRider B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D F41 CWY has been purchased recently for use on Stirling Council services C36 and C48. It was previously Metrobus, Orpington 908 and is in all-over white with blue Morrison Travel fleetnames.

Morrow, Glasgow

Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50R P502 YGA was sold to Caetano (dealer), Heather in October.

Myles, Plean

UVG CitiStar C29F-bodied Iveco 59.12 P973 UKG has been purchased for use on Falkirk Council service 288 (Falkirk-California).

Nicoll, Laurencekirk

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614Ds V501/2 SFS were new in January.

Order of Malta, Stirling

Rural Transport Grant-funded service C25 (Stirling-Kinross via Tullibody and Crook of Devon) was started on 16 January on behalf of Clackmannanshire Council and provides two Sunday return journeys.

Orion, Wemyss Bay

Optare MetroRider J797 MHF was previously registered J6 ACL, J364 BHW.

Alexander B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D F951 BMS Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D RBZ 3428 (*D39 UAO*) were sold to Ramm (dealer), Sudden in July and February respectively.

Park, Hamilton

The first new coaches to arrive this year were Scottish Citylink-liveried KSK 954 and LSK 495-7, Plaxton Premiere C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s new in January. Plaxton Paragon-bodied Volvo B10M-62s HSK 651-60 were expected to enter service during March.

PD Travel, Glasgow

The recently-introduced service between Glasgow City Centre and Balornock East was cancelled from 25 February.

Prentice, West Calder

Alexander H48/36F-bodied Ailsa B55-10 HSR 41X was acquired in November ex-Travel Dundee 41, and Caetano C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P685 DRS arrived in February ex-Whyte, Newmachar.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-61 570 PRR (*711 GRM, JBM 20Y*) and Duple-bodied DAF MB230 E597 LVH were re-registered DLS 545Y and 570 PRR respectively in January before the former was sold to Milligan, Mauchline. Other vehicles sold recently comprise Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 CXI 897 (*81 CBK, HSB 373Y, 3099 SC*) to Martin, Uphall and MCW Metroliner C167 BMS (*MBZ 8505, C233 CES, DIL 4100, C981 HOX*) to Day, Kilnhurst.

Group codes

AA — Arriva
Passenger
Services
FG — FirstGroup
NX — National
Express
Group
RN — Rapsons
ST — Stagecoach
YT — Yorkshire
Traction



Park of Hamilton is taking delivery of the first 10 production Plaxton Paragon coach bodies on Volvo B10M chassis.

Puma, Glasgow

Carlisle B28F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D H882 LOX and similar B29F-bodied H107 HDV were acquired late last year ex-Stagecoach Fife 2, 6. In January, the former moved to the Skyline, Barrhead fleet and the latter was repainted into a red, yellow and white overall advertising livery for the Pollok Shopping Centre. MCW Metrorider F116 YWO carries a mainly blue advertising livery for Langlands Radio Cars. PMT-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D CLZ 3035 (G211 NLG) was sold to Campbell, East Kilbride last June.

Rapsons Coaches RN

New Plaxton Expressliner-bodied Volvo B10M-62s V843/4 JST had been delivered by the end of January and are in National Express Rapide livery.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 626 (9637 EL, M45 KAX) has been repainted into a new livery for this fleet of the darker blue used in the 'corporate' livery over a black rather than lighter blue skirt. On the rear of this coach is a map showing all of the group's depots.

625/38, two other Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62s, have been repainted from Rapson's Coaches livery into Scottish Citylink colours.

Reliable, Johnstone

Dormobile B20F-bodied DAF 400 M93 EGE and Dormobile B20FL-bodied LDV 400 N749 LUS had been purchased by January, having previously been with Riverside, Barrhead and Marshall, Troon respectively.

Riverside, Barrhead

Dormobile-bodied DAF 400 M93 EGE was sold to Reliable, Johnstone in January.

Scotway, Paisley

Services registered to start on 11 January were 2A (Barrhead circular via Auchenback and Blackbyres, daily, every 30 minutes), 4A (Paisley-Neilston, daily, every 15 minutes, or every 30 minutes on Sundays), and 5A (Paisley-Auchenback via Todholm, daily, every 15-30 minutes). A 20-minute frequency is also to be operated on a new service 3A between Glasgow (City Centre) and Barrhead (Auchenback), competing directly with the parallel Arriva Scotland West (previously McGill, Barrhead) service 3.

Silver Fox, Renfrew

C49Ft Bova FHD12-330 12 EWO was acquired in January ex-Clan, Kyle and quickly re-registered SIL 4134. Similar C53F-bodied 12-290 PIL 2172 (K813 EET) was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in February and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo K265 SSD passed to White Star, Neilston in January. Alexander-bodied Ailsa JOV 784P and the remains of similar fire-damaged OSC 64V were sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall last July.

Skyline, Barrhead

MCW Metrorider F68 RFS and Carlisle-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D H882 LOX from the Puma, Glasgow fleet were being used by this operator from last August and January respectively.

Slocoach, Motherwell

Marshall B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D V726 GGE was new in November. A new half-hourly, Monday to Saturday service between Motherwell and North Motherwell was started on 23 February. Services between Motherwell and Hamilton Asda ceased on that date.

Smith, Coupar Angus

Van Hool C50F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 F807 TMD passed to Walker, Neilston in February.

Spencer, Leven

DAF-engined Leyland National 11351A/1R-B49F TOF 709S was acquired in February ex-Stagecoach Midland Red 709. Similar PCD 79R and AYJ 91T were sold to Hardwick (dealer), Carlton in January and February respectively.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

More re-registrations to record are those of Leyland Titans 080 (B93 WUV) to NIB 5233, 081 (B100 WUV) to NIB 5232, 083 (B110 WUV) to RIB 4309; Leyland Tigers 440 (NIB 5233, B48 DWE) to B48 DWE, 447 (126 ASV, BMS 511Y) to BMS 511Y, 449 (128 ASV, BMS 515Y) to BMS 515Y, 452 (VLT 272, D438 XRS, LSK 548, D438 XRS) to D982 BRS, 453 (147 YFM, D439 XRS) to D439 XRS, 454 (BSK 756, E640 BRS) to E640 BRS, 459 (RIB 4309, A40 XHE) to A40 XHE; Volvo B10M-62s 601 (M911 WJK) to WLT 444, 602 (M912 WJK) to 147 YFM; and Volvo B10M-60 639 (L83 YBB) to NUF 276.

To update last month's report, Plaxton Paramount-bodied Leyland Tiger 457 (CSO 587Y, VLT 245, BYJ 919Y, 404 DCD, XUF 534Y) was re-registered again in January to A601 JSA.

Leyland-bodied Leyland Titan 080 was transferred to Stagecoach Fife in January.

Stagecoach Fife ST

From 10 January the Dundee-St Andrews section of Stagecoach Express services X59/X60 (Dundee-Edinburgh) was withdrawn, and as a result there are now no express services over that part of the route.

Leyland-bodied Leyland Titan NIB 5233 (B93 WUV) was transferred from Stagecoach Bluebird (080) in January.

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 709 (TSO 20X) was acquired by Jones, Bontnewydd in October.

Stagecoach Western ST

444/8/9/51/2 (K120 SRH, L137/8/43/4 VRH) are further Plaxton Pointer B34F-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDLs transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach London in January. They were numbered DRL120/37/8/43/4 by their previous owner and 451 has been allocated to Ayr depot.

Alexander B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 241/5 (G256/1 TSL), 286 (E91 LBV) and 287 (E93 LHG) have been transferred to Stagecoach Busways. Other vehicles which have left the fleet comprise Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards 629 (GMS 285S), 647/51/3/60 (GCS 47, 51/3, 60V), 691 (TSJ 31S); and Leyland Nationals 759 (KHH 378W), 775 (MDS 865V), 791 (YFS 309W).

Steele, Stevenston

Roe-bodied Leyland Atlantean DSD 55V was sold to Irvine, Law in January.

Stepend, Glenmavis

Reeve Burgess-bodied Iveco 49.10 G915 KWF passed to Bulldog, Whitburn last year.

Stokes, Carstairs

Marshall B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D T409 BGB was new last August. M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 412D R727 EGD was acquired at that time ex-McGovern, Newton Mearns and immediately re-registered WSU 209.

Strathgait YF

Further to the January issue, Leyland Tigers DBZ 918, THL 290Y and KIB 6527 were allocated fleetnumbers 427-9 on acquisition. The sixth vehicle purchased at the end of last year for rebodysing was Plaxton C46Ft-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R 430 (HIL 8419, YTC 856, A56 WDT), previously Lincolnshire Road Car 419.

East Lancs Flyte-bodied MAN NL222F demonstrator N222 LFR was noted with this operator in February.

Stuart, Carluke

Hourly, Monday to Saturday evening Strathclyde Passenger Transport service 200 (Salsburgh-Monklands Hospital) commenced on 31 January.

Travel Dundee NX

Wright Renown B45F-bodied Volvo B10BLEs 176/7 (V176/7 ESL) entered service in January, completing the batch of these buses.

Further to the December issue, Plaxton C45Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-56 TC16/251 (NSV 616, OES 343Y) did not leave the fleet last year, and is still owned.

Plaxton CheetaH-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario TC11/246 was repainted into the purple Travel Greyhound livery in December.

Duple-bodied Dennis Javelin TC12/247 (F314 NSP, USU 662, F314 NSP) passed to Stephenson, Rochford in October. Northern Counties Paladin B49F-bodied Volvo B10B-58 115 (K247 HKV) was transferred to Travel West Midlands in December. Alexander-bodied Ailsa B55-10 41 (HSR 41X) was sold in November to Prentice, West Calder. Similar 42/4 (HSR 42/4X) have also left the fleet as has Scott-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D 200 (BUS 6X, H780 YYS).

Waverley, Edinburgh

Olympic C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D M687 KPD was acquired about a year ago ex-Spring Park Hotels, Gatwick. Noted in service on loan at the beginning of February was B29F Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart T546 HNH. Carlisle B25F-bodied Iveco 49.10 G24 GCC was sold last year.

Wells, Aberfoyle

New Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62s V431/3 EAL had entered the Lochs & Glens fleet by January.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

Wright Crusader B37F-bodied Volvo B6BLEs V452/3 NGA were new in February.

Whyte, Newmachar

Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P685 DRS passed to Prentice, West Calder in February.

Wilson, Carnwath

Wright B26F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds NDZ 927/8/30 were acquired from Allison, Dunfermline in January.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean SCN 285S was sold recently to Grangeburn, Motherwell. Similar SCN 280S and AVK 144V were acquired by Embling, Guyhirn last September.

West Lothian Council-supported services between Bathgate and Livingston were cancelled from 18 December.

Wilson, Gourrock

North West Conversions C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D G111 OGA passed to Geater, Benhall about a year ago.

Wood, Edinburgh

Robin Hood B25F-bodied Iveco 49.10 2 (F552 DCC) was acquired last year.



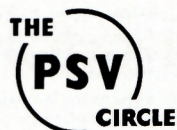
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Travel Dundee withdrew its last Volvo Ailsas last year. Northern Counties-bodied former 51 (OSN 851Y) with Shuttle Buses of Kilwinning is one of several which have passed to Scottish independents.

BILLY NICOL

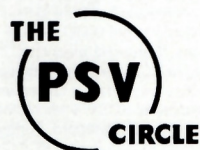
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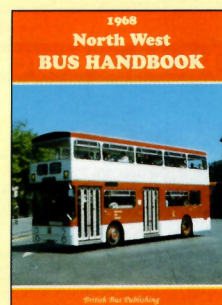
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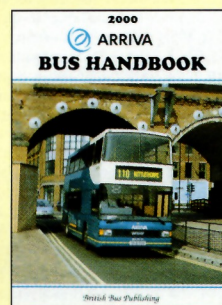
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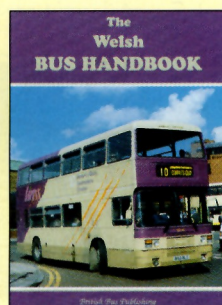
1968 North West Bus Handbook – £12.50

A nostalgic look back to the buses of 1968, this Bus Handbook contains the fleets of the major operators of the time presented in the format used today. Well illustrated with a blend of colour and mono, the book has been much requested to provide a record of the vehicles prior to the formation of the PTEs.



The year 2000 editions of the three major group books are now in preparation, and will be out during the spring. The

Arriva book is now with the printers and includes the latest acquisition. Stagecoach is slightly thinner this year following the sale of Swebus – though the mainland China fleet is now included. The FirstGroup books include the latest changes to the Hong Kong fleet, a very popular addition. Each book will cost £16



Coming June – The Welsh Bus handbook. One thick book covering the whole principality – £15.00

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IRISH MAJOR OPERATORS**Ulsterbus**

Thirteen more new low-floor Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B45F in service are 2814/31-42 (CCZ 8814/31-42), allocated respectively to Lagside, Coleraine (two), Bangor (two), Newtownards (two), Lisburn (four) and Derry City (two).

Vehicles delicensed and placed in reserve are Bristol RELL/Alexander 2257/8/73/97-9 (ROI 2257/8, TOI 2273/97-9), Leyland Leopard/Alexander 128 (ROI 128), Leyland Tiger/Duple Caribbean coach 554 (BXI 5554) and Tiger/Van Hool 595 (OXI 525). Other coaches allocated to the driving school to meet additional training needs or as replacements are Tiger 551 (BXI 5551) and DAF MB230s 682/6 (RXI 6682/6). Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards 108/18 (ROI 108/18) have been allocated to Magherafelt and Omagh depots for conversion into towing vehicles.

Citybus

As illustrated in last month's 'News' section, one of the two Mercedes-Benz O.405N articulated buses is 3101 (DCZ 3101) and had been delivered to Newtownabbey depot by 12 January but has not entered service. Four of the rigid O.405N models have entered service there as 2100/3-5 (DCZ 2101/3-5). Surprisingly, all of these vehicles are in the traditional Citybus livery of ivory and red, rather than the Translink corporate livery for low-floor buses which is to be applied at a later date. Although purchased for City Express services, the four rigid buses are operating on normal Citybus routes as it has been realised that 44-seaters are less than adequate replacements for 53-seat semi-coaches on this well-patronised flagship route. They are to displace four recently-delivered Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns which will be repainted for a forthcoming quality route.

A shortage of vehicles has arisen owing to a need for modifications and repairs, so Bristol RELL/Alexander 2465/73/6/99 (WOI 8465/73/6, XOI 2499) have been reinstated from reserve. One of the vehicles awaiting repair is accident-damaged Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-type 1455 (YXI 1455).

Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 2611 (NXI 4611) has lost its Tango Lime overall advertising livery and has reverted to fleet livery. Short Strand-based Tiger/Q-types 2661/2 (VXI 2661/2), which operate Stena Line contracts at Belfast as part of their duties, are receiving a new Stena Line HSS Ferries advertising livery, after running for a few weeks in between in all-over white.

Dublin Bus

Volvo Olympian/Alexander RHs RV620-5 entered service at Phibsboro in February, providing additional peak-hour Euro duties on the Lucan Road Quality Bus Corridor and on Clondalkin routes 51B/X.

Further to last month's article on the Stillorgan QBC, passenger volumes continued to grow very significantly from early January, despite expectations that numbers might either level off or even reduce. An additional injection point for buses — to provide extra capacity on the corridor — has been established at Trees Road, Mount Merrion, using buses from Clontarf and Phibsboro garages.

Other news of Olympians is that RV576-83 provide the principal duties on Donnybrook's routes 7A/8 (City Centre-Loughlinstown/Mackintosh Park/Dalkey), replacing single-deckers. RV572 has been fitted with a standard full-size front destination display, completing Louth Commercial's conversion of the batch RV556-600. It is also repairing older Olympian RA190, in Heinz Weightwatchers advertising livery, after it was deroofed by a low bridge at Bray on St Valentine's Day.

Donnybrook-based DAF SB220/Alexander Setanta AD51 has lost City Swift livery to become a wrap-over (bodywork and all passenger windows) advertisement for Heineken lager. Olympian RA208 (on loan from Ringsend to Donnybrook) is in a double-deck version of this livery without any advertising on its side windows.

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz minibuses MA9-11 have been transferred from Donnybrook to Phibsboro and painted into City Imp livery, while Leicester Carriage Builders' converted ML9-11 have moved in the opposite direction, losing City Imp colours in favour of cream/blue/orange fleet livery for Localink services around Bray.

Further to last month's issue, GAC Citybuses KC69, 71 (KZG 69, 71) have not yet been withdrawn, but Donnybrook has instead retired KC81/6 (KZG 81/6), and the registration of withdrawn KC29 is **ZSI 29**. Withdrawn Leyland Atlantean D635 was open-top.

Olympian RA 234 (95 D 234) was destroyed by fire on 21 February.

Bus Eireann

Political and financial approval has been granted for the company's new vehicle programme, with 136 buses and 137 coaches due this year — all but 35 of them being purchased outright. The programme includes the 20 Mercedes-Benz Citaro citybuses and 59 Volvo B10M/Plaxton coaches already reported in *Buses* (leased VP93-104 and purchased VP301-47); all of the leased Volvos and 40 of the purchased examples will be Excaliburs for Expressway services, with the other seven (six Excaliburs and one Paragon) being for tours. A further 23 Scania L94IB/irizar Century coaches (SI49-71) are to be leased, but a new type is to be introduced in the shape of 55 Volvo B7R/Plaxton Prima C55F commuter coaches — the first sizeable order Volvo has secured from an Irish or British operator for its medium weight rear-engined coach.

Bus orders contain some surprises, too, with 15 DAF SB120/Wright Cadet midibuses for Galway, 10 Volvo

B6BLE/Wright Crusader 2 midis for Cork, 21 Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 10.7m for Limerick and Waterford and 20 Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 12m buses (VWL12-31) for Cork.

An order is also expected to be placed for 50 double-deckers. Driver agreement was secured for the trial of Dublin Bus Volvo Olympian RV628 (and possibly also by RV627/9 and two others) at Drogheda on commuter service 101 (Drogheda-Dublin), starting on 28 February.

In addition, 15 used 1987-89 Leyland Tigers are to be purchased from the UK to modernise the school transport fleet.

Further to last month's report, B10M/Excaliburs VP93-6 — leased from Volvo Contract Services — have been registered 00 D 21108/094/87/98/76/84. VP93-7 are allocated to Broadstone, while VP98 is at Dundalk; the rest of the batch is to be allocated to Dundalk (VP99), Galway (VP100), Athlone (VP101), Limerick (VP102) and Sligo (VP103/4). Their arrival will lead to three-year-old leased B10Ms VP36-47 being retained for a possible extra six months at Broadstone. One of VP93-6 is to replace VP44 on service 873 (Ballina-London), VP97-9 will replace Scania SI26-8 on 001 (Dublin-Belfast), VP100 will replace VP40 on 871 (Galway-London) and VP101 will replace VP42 on services 021/874 (Westport-Dublin/London); SI26/7 move to Limerick, displacing VP73/4 to Galway to replace VP38/9 on service 871; VP75 is to move from Limerick to Waterford to replace VP41; VP71/2 move from Tralee to Broadstone to replace VP36/7 on service 873, while Broadstone loses SI11-4 to Tralee to replace VP43/5, 71/2 on 013 (Tralee-Dublin).

Plaxton-bodied DPL7 (S793 RRL), the last of the 23 Dawsonrentals Dennis Dart SLFs, has entered service at Limerick with Irish registration 98 D 70898.

Limerick-based GAC Citybuses KC178/9/82/3/5/9 (LZS 178 etc) have been withdrawn following arrival of the Darts on six months' lease pending delivery of the Citaros. KC178 was in an overall advertising livery for the *Evening Echo* newspaper, but suffered an engine failure; it is thought that its livery may be applied instead to another KC, possibly KC190. The other five of these buses have been placed in store at Thurles pending possible conversion from B35D to B45F as KCS-class school buses. Waterford, meantime, is converting KC109/74/5 to KCS standard, with the intention of using KC96 — which has a seized engine — as a source of spare parts. KCS175 will be the first of its class to go into service at Waterford. Further to last month's report, former KC129 is now KCS129.

Following the allocation of Leicester Carriage Builders-bodied Mercedes-Benz minibus ML107 to Drogheda (ex-storage at Limerick), GAC Rural Bus KR163 has been cascaded from town services to school bus duties as KS163.

School buses withdrawn are MGS34 (34 IK), a Detroit Diesel re-engined Leyland Leopard PSU5/Metal Sections of 1971, similar Leyland-engined MS53 (53 IK) and SS796 (796 TYI), a Bedford NJM/Van Hool-McArdle of 1978; SS796 and similar SS783 had latterly been painted in standard red/white bus livery rather than school bus yellow. MS53 was at Broadstone, the other two at Dundalk.

Cork's first fully orbital route, Monday to Friday service 201, began on 24 January using three Wright-bodied Volvos. It links route 8's eastern terminus at Mayfield with the Wilton shopping centre (Cork University Hospital) near the western route 8 terminus at Bishopstown; it serves Ballyvolane, Blackpool, Farrerree, Gurrabraher, Knocknaheeny, Sunday's Well and Rossa Avenue, crossing routes 3, 5, 7 and 8 and providing a welcome addition to the network of services provided in Cork's expanding suburbs.

No doubt influenced by the fact that new operator Aircoach has a licence to operate from Mullingar to Dublin airport (even though it has yet to start this service), Bus Eireann increased its service 115 (Mullingar-Dublin) from 31 January. Before, one VC-class B10M/Caetano coach was based overnight at Mullingar, but now there are three, with early morning departures from Mullingar at 06.15, 06.35, 07.35 and 08.45, with the first bus reaching Dublin at 07.55. All buses arriving in Dublin before 09.30, and the 14.00 departure from Mullingar, serve the St Stephen's Green south side business district before terminating at Bus Aras; the 07.00 departure of derivative service 117 (Longwood-Dublin) also operates via St Stephen's Green.

IRISH INDEPENDENTS**J. J. Kavanagh, Urlingford**

Another new Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere 350 coach, similar to the three noted last month, is 00 W 11.

Lough Swilly

Former Bus Eireann Van Hool Acron integral coach SI 2024 has been resprayed into a modified white/green livery. SI 2018 was expected to be the second of these coaches to enter service. No fleetnumbers yet confirmed.



Ulsterbus 2812 (CCZ 8812), one of the current delivery of Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 12m buses in the operator's version of Translink corporate livery, at Belfast's Lagside depot.
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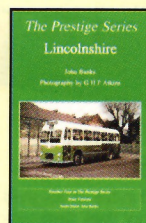
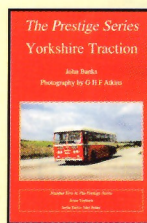
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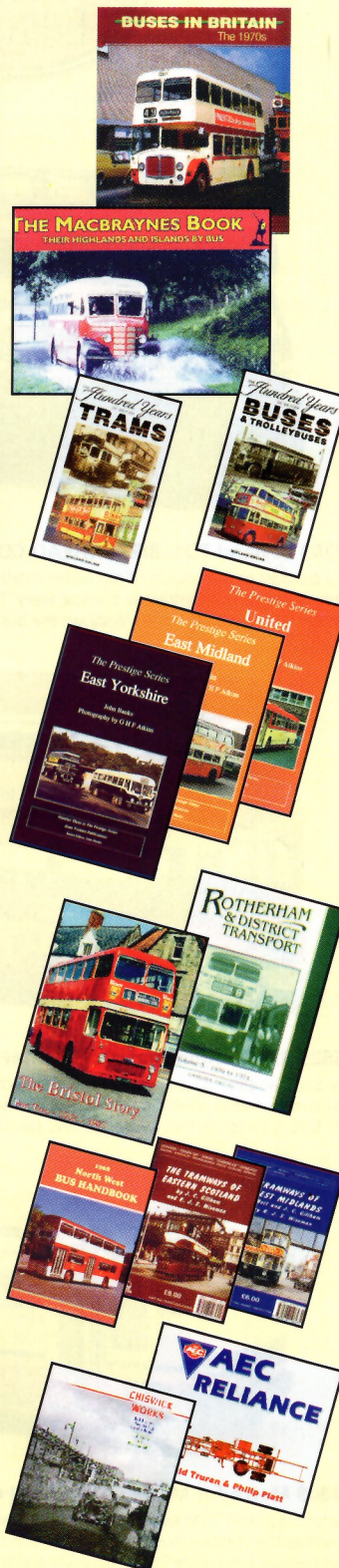
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27203 Leyland TD1 BIRKENHEAD CORPORATION.

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26202 Guy Arab I Utility Bus COLCHESTER CORPORATION.

One of the corporation fleet to stand the test of time is Colchester who have operated an interesting variety of vehicle types. Our second release of a Guy Arab I features Colchesters fleet number 38 registered JTW 750 on route 6A to Old Heath Post Office, and carries adverts for a local newspaper and Co-op shopping.



15629 RM Routemaster SOUTHAMPTON CITYBUS.

The Southampton Routemasters retained much of their original London identity which was customised to advertise the new Citybus service. Fleet number 402 registered 793 DYE is on route 17A to Weston and still carries its RM 1793 identity.



22706DL Alexander Y Type LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL.

An attractive addition to our De-Luxe range, we find fleet number 17 registered MFR 17R on route 53 to Vale. The restricted quantity of our De-Luxe models make them very collectable so be ready and place your order early.



24809 Mercedes Minibus EASTERN COUNTIES.

Transferred from Thamesway and now decorated in the established livery of Eastern Counties this minibus makes a great addition to our fleet. Registered H354 LJN, fleet number 875 is on route 25 to University via Unthank Road.



17502 Leyland National II Long SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRANSPORT.

Continuing to build on our South Yorkshire theme is this mark 2 National which looks very smart in the sand and tan colours. Fleet number 26 registered KWA 26N is on route 244 to Sheffield.



26607 Plaxton Paramount 3500 SKILLS.

The distinctive colours of the Skills Scenicruiers livery look very striking on our Paramount making it a welcome addition to our growing Skills fleet. Registered F44 GTO this vehicle was used on long distance quality tours.



20423 Bristol VR III STAGECOACH UNITED COUNTIES.

Our second Stagecoach vehicle features a Bristol VR from the United Counties fleet and looks very stunning. Fleet number 878 registered XNV 8785 is on the busy route 158 to Milton Keynes. This attractive model carries adverts on the sides and rear promoting Coachlinks Oxford to Cambridge express service.



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